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Fight Master Magazine

The Society of American Fight Directors

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Summer 2005

## **The Fight Master, Spring/Summer 2005, Vol. 28 Issue 1**

The Society of American Fight Directors

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# The Fight Master

www.safd.org Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors

## The Search for Style in *TROY*



**Defiant Acts:  
The End of an  
Era of Stage  
Combat in  
Chicago**

**Fight  
Direction  
in Musical  
Theatre**

**2004  
NSCW  
and Barn  
Workshop  
Reports**



# STAGE COMBAT: EXTREME ACTING



**Coleman** (Bill Christ) is biting **Valene** (Mark Rubald) in the 2002 Denver Center Theatre Company's production of Martin McDonough's **Lonesome West**. Directed by Anthony Powell. Fight Direction by Geoffrey Kent. Photograph courtesy of Denver Center Media.

## The Society of American Fight Directors 26th Annual *National Stage Combat Workshops* July 11-29, 2005

SAFD and University of Nevada-Las Vegas  
College of Fine Arts, Department of Theatre

For more information: Linda McCollum at (702) 895-3662 or [www.safd.org](http://www.safd.org)

### **Actor/Combatant Workshop (ACW)**

Train in the foundation skills of stage combat. World-class industry professionals teach techniques in Rapier and Dagger, Unarmed and Broadsword. Additionally, participants will receive an introduction to Quarterstaff, film fighting, and other weapon styles. Participants may opt to take an adjudicated Skills Proficiency Test at the end of the workshop.

### **Advanced Actor/Combatant Workshop (AACW)**

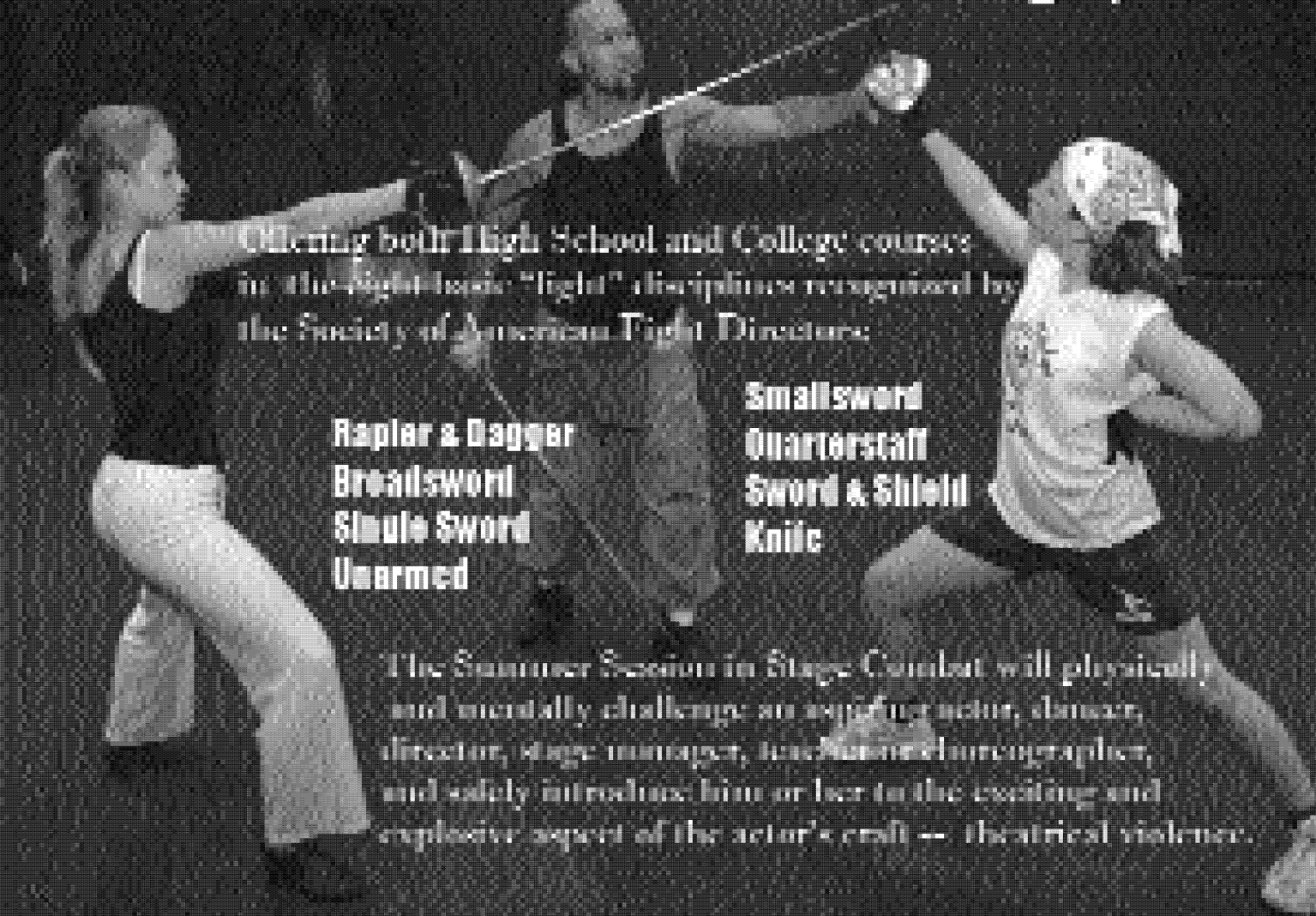
Not for the "weak of skill," this intense workshop offers Advanced Actor/Fighters the opportunity to challenge and hone their existing skills at a highly sophisticated level. Working with a small group of similarly gifted students, participants will study many advanced weapon styles and techniques, exploring both their mechanical and theatrical application.

The AACW staff will assess the skill level and specific needs of the students and will determine the specific SPT renewals and skills tests to be offered.

# *North Carolina School of the Arts*

## **Summer Session in Stage Combat**

**Three-Week Intensive: June 20 - July 8, 2005**



Offering both High School and College courses  
in the eight basic "fight" disciplines recognized by  
the Society of American Fight Directors:

**Rapier & Dagger  
Broadsword  
Single Sword  
Unarmed**

**Smallsword  
Quarterstaff  
Sword & Shield  
Knife**

The Summer Session in Stage Combat will physically  
and mentally challenge an aspiring actor, dancer,  
director, stage manager, technician/choreographer,  
and safely introduce him or her to the exciting and  
explosive aspect of the actor's craft -- theatrical violence.

A National Stage Combat Workshop of the Society of American Fight Directors,  
the program is open to both college and high school students  
who wish to explore this exciting and intriguing aspect of the actor's craft,  
are over 15 and have completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

College and High School credit is available to all attending students.

**For more information: 336 734-2834 or [stage\\_combat@ncarts.edu](mailto:stage_combat@ncarts.edu)**

**To Register: 336 770-3290 or [admissions@ncarts.edu](mailto:admissions@ncarts.edu)**

**Please visit the SACS website -- [http://www.safd.org/HSCW/NCSA/HSCW\\_NCSA.html](http://www.safd.org/HSCW/NCSA/HSCW_NCSA.html)**



# Announcing the Fight Director's Workshop 2005

**We are pleased to announce the details of the 2005 Fight Director's Workshops, and the many changes and improvements we've made.**

**First, we are moving!** To better serve our students, we are moving to the large facilities at the North Carolina School Of The Arts. There, we can take advantage of several theatres, tons of rehearsal spaces in the School of Drama, and the state of the art facilities at the School of Filmmaking.

**Second, we are changing dates!**

The National Fight Directors Workshop -

The Actors Ensemble Workshop -

The Action Film Workshop -

**July 31 - August 20**

July 31 to Aug 12, J. Allen Suddeth, Richard Ryan

July 31 to Aug. 12, k. Jenny Jones, Mark Olsen

August 7 to August 20, A. C. Weary, Dale A. Girard

**Third, we are expanding the FDW workshops to include:**



**The Fight Directors and Actors Ensemble Workshops** will function as always, dealing with the business of training fight directors, directors and actors for stage fights from all styles and periods in history. Brawls, battles, duels, and domestic violence from the world of theatre form our exercises. From Shakespeare to Shepard, we work to feed the artist inside you!

**The Action Film Workshop**

This is a new, two-week workshop, providing training in film/TV fighting, acting, and second unit directing/stunt coordinating. This is not a stunt school but designed for the actor/director who wants to take the next step in film experience. Students will work in a variety of action film styles, shooting on location, and in studios with broadcast quality digital video equipment.



**You will walk away from this workshop with an edited DVD reel of your work!**

**Fees: Take one, take both!**

**Fight Directors Workshop (2 weeks)**

**Fight Directors and Directors**

**\$1,100 plus housing**

**Actors**

**\$900 plus housing**

**Action Film Workshop (2 weeks)**

**Fight Directors, Directors, Camera ops, LD's**

**\$1,200 plus housing**

**Actors**

**\$900 plus housing**

**Both FDW, and week 3 of AFW (3 weeks total)**

**\$1,800 plus housing**

**Actors all three weeks**

**\$1,400 plus housing**



**Housing @ \$30.00/day, air conditioned rooms with kitchen, and laundry.**

**Discounts: All SAFD membership discounts apply, in other words, 10% off tuition!**

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**More information may be had by e-mail, at: [NYFGTDIRCTR@AOL.COM](mailto:NYFGTDIRCTR@AOL.COM)**

# The Fight Master

Spring/Summer 2005  
Vol XXVIII, Number 1  
www.safd.org

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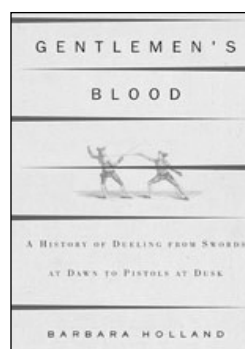


**On the Front Cover:**

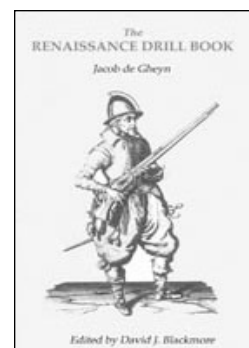
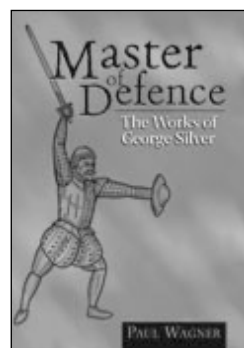
Swordmaster Richard Ryan (left) and Buster Reeves (right) demonstrate the Achilles/Hector fight from the Warner Bros. film TROY. Photograph by Gary Beach. Used under authorization.

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**On the Back Cover:**

A shot from the Achilles/Hector fight on location for the Warner Bros. film TROY. Photograph by Gary Beach. Used under authorization.

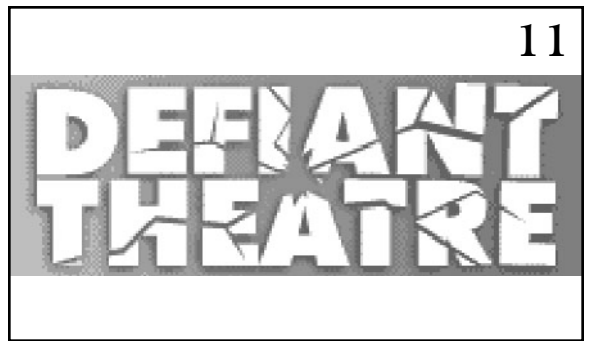


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Photograph Courtesy of Robert Petkoff

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*2004 Celebration Barn Workshop.*

*Master's Workshop at Lake Tahoe.*

# EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

**T**he Spring/Summer issue of *The Fight Master* focuses on hands-on staged combat experiences in film, theatre, and musicals.

In a interview with Richard Ryan, Dr. Michael Kirkland explores several factors involved in staging the fights in Wolfgang Peterson's *TROY*, from auditioning to stage the fights, to working out the vision for the fights with stunt men, to the actual staging of the fights with the stars. Ryan is very candid about the experience, revealing the many aspects involved in filming violence in the professional film industry.

On another level, Sean Boyd points out some of the procedures a fight director must add to his repertoire when staging fights in a musical. Time is limited, and everything needs to be coordinated in advance to accomplish all the tasks at hand in the time allocated. One must know the music, keep the conductor visible to the performers at all times, and coordinate the end of the fight with the staging needed for the next musical number. These are just some of the factors that must be taken into account when staging fights in a musical.

Ryan Lawrence pays tribute to the end of an era in Chicago theatre history. Stage combat has been the mainstay of the productions of Chicago's Defiant Theatre for eleven years. Probably no theatre has provided more opportunities to learn and practice stage combat than the Defiant Theatre. Ryan Lawrence records and celebrates this unusual theatre venue, which brought unique and challenging stage combat projects to mainstream audiences, as it closes its doors.

*The Fight Master* is seeking articles on all aspects of staged combat for the Fall/Winter issue, which need to be received by June 1, 2005. Articles for the Spring/Summer 2006 issue need to be received by November 1, 2005.

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

**Sean Boyd** is an MFA graduate from the University of Nevada Las Vegas, who is currently pursuing a career as a professional actor and fight choreographer.

**Michael Chin**, NYC Fight Director and professional actor, is the NSCW Coordinator and founding member of Fights 4. Faculty at Pace University in Manhattan, he coordinates the NY Regional Workshop and teaches stage combat at Brooklyn College.

**Michael Kirkland, PhD.** is the chair of the Department of Theatre Arts at Regent University. Kirkland has taught and choreographed for the Houston Grand Opera, Houston Shakespeare & Shaw Festivals, and the Universities of Michigan, Utah, and Oklahoma.

**Ryan Lawrence** is an actor/combatant in the SAFD, holds a BFA in Acting from Millikin University, and is currently working towards his MA in Writing at DePaul University. In Chicago he has worked as an actor and director and is a professional magician and juggler. His website is [www.amazingryan.com](http://www.amazingryan.com).

**Linda Carlyle McCollum**, a member of the Society of American Fight Directors and the International Academy of Arms, serves as editor of *The Fight Master* and on-site coordinator for the National Stage Combat Workshops. McCollum is faculty in the Department of Theatre at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

**J. Allen Suddeth**, past President of the Society of American Fight Directors, is a Fight Master and the author of *Fight Directing for the Theatre*. A fight director on Broadway, in regional theatres and on daytime television drama, he teaches at the Lee Strasberg Institute and NYU and has run the Fight Director's Workshop at the Celebration Barn for a number of years.

**Drew Sutherland** is an assistant Professor of Theatre at California State University Stanislaus where he teaches acting, stage combat, movement, and Linklater voice. He is a member of AAC, SAG/AFTRA.

**Thomas C. Turner**, a graduate of UNLV, is the founder and artistic directors of Two by Two, a children's theatre company in the Los Angeles area.

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Articles and letters for *The Fight Master* are accepted at anytime. Articles intended for inclusion in the Spring/Summer issue must be received by November 1. Articles intended for the Fall/Winter issue must be received by June 1.

Submissions should be sent to:

*The Fight Master*

UNLV Dept. of Theatre 4505 Maryland Parkway Las Vegas, NV 89154-5044

Fax: (702) 895-0833 E-mail: [mccollum@ccmail.nevada.edu](mailto:mccollum@ccmail.nevada.edu)

Submitted material will be edited for clarity and length. Articles should be typed, and include a short biography, 50 words or less, about the author. Please include the address, phone/fax and e-mail address in the correspondence.



# GRAPHICALLY SPEAKING

**T**he Fight Master is currently seeking active photos of stage combat for upcoming issues. Black & white and color prints (no smaller than 4" x 6") and slides will be accepted. All photos should include the performers' names and roles (if fewer than five are pictured), photographer, play, playwright, fight director, theatre company and year of performance. Photos should also include return address. Without this information, pictures cannot be used. 8" x 10" prints or color slides with strong vertical orientations are also desired for covers; these should be shot as close up as possible (full bodies need not be visible).

**Digital camera photographs must meet the following additional criteria:**

**Cover Photographs:**

- ◆ 1200 dpi (dots per inch)
- ◆ Vertical orientation
- ◆ .tif or .jpg file formats

**Interior Photographs:**

- ◆ 300 dpi (dots per inch)
- ◆ Any orientation
- ◆ .tif or .jpg file formats

The deadline for graphic material for the Fall/Winter issue is July 31, for the Spring/Summer issue is January 31. Submissions are accepted at any time. Send all prints sandwiched between two pieces of cardboard in an envelope clearly labeled "Photos - Do Not Bend" to:

**John Tovar**  
**3810 N. Oakley Ave, 2nd Floor**  
**Chicago, IL 60618-3814**

If there are any questions, please feel free to call (630) 330-4293 or e-mail JTovarSAFD@aol.com. Again, exciting photos are encouraged from all levels of the SAFD membership.

John Tovar

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## Workshop Coordinators and Advertisers

*The Fight Master* advertises non-SAFD workshops and services, including:

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- ◆ Performances
- ◆ Publishers
- ◆ Armorers
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- ◆ Other Theatre/Combat-related Training Goods or Services.
- ◆ Training Institutions
- ◆ Theatre Companies
- ◆ Books and Scripts
- ◆ Swordcutlers
- ◆ Martial Arts Suppliers
- ◆ Fencing Suppliers

Workshops that have officially been sanctioned as SAFD workshops as detailed in the Policies & Procedures are entitled to a free 1/4 page ad in *The Fight Master*. Larger ads may be purchased at a discounted rate. Non-SAFD workshop ads may be purchased at full price. Ads can be designed by a graphic designer for a slight fee. For more information please contact:

Tom Carr  
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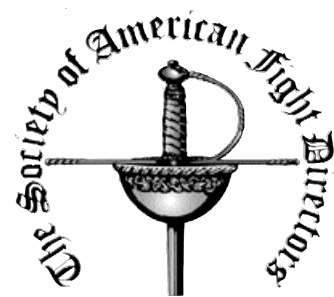
Notification for advertising in the Spring/Summer issue must be received by December 1; artwork due by January 15. Notification for the Fall/Winter issue must be received by July 1; artwork due by August 15. Please call for rates or other information.

# The Fight Master

Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors

*The Fight Master* is published bi-annually

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

The College of Fight Masters held two days of intensive meetings January 8 and 9, 2005, at Columbia College in Chicago. Long and detailed discussions on many topics were held during those two days. Among the issues covered were a review and suggested revisions to the newly approved Fight Master election procedure, review of current workshop offerings and preliminary work on potential new offerings, and a review of current hiring practices at NSCW workshops and suggestions for revisions to those practices. Additionally, Michael Chin's application for Fight Master was reviewed and voted on with the result that Chin has been named as the newest member of the College of Fight Masters. These meetings were very productive. Special thanks are extended to the College of Fight Masters for their continued hard work on behalf of the SAFD.

The SAFD members at all levels have been very active in the betterment of the organization. Membership in the SAFD has almost tripled during the last few years and the society's offerings are expanding. Finally achieving union recognition has also been an important change for the SAFD. It is the hard work of dedicated members from all membership levels that has made this all possible. Let the members keep this spirit alive and build on this strong foundation to make a better SAFD.

Fight the good fight.

Chuck Coyl

## EDITORIAL STAFF

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## Aaron Anderson

**Fight Director,  
Movement Teacher**

- MFA in Acting and Asian Theatre from the University of Hawaii
- Interdisciplinary PhD in Theatre and Drama from Northwestern University
- internationally certified as a teacher of stage combat with the Society of American Fight Directors, the British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat, and Dueling Arts International
- taught movement at the Banff Center for the Performing Arts, London's City Literary Institute, & the Denver Center for the Performing Arts

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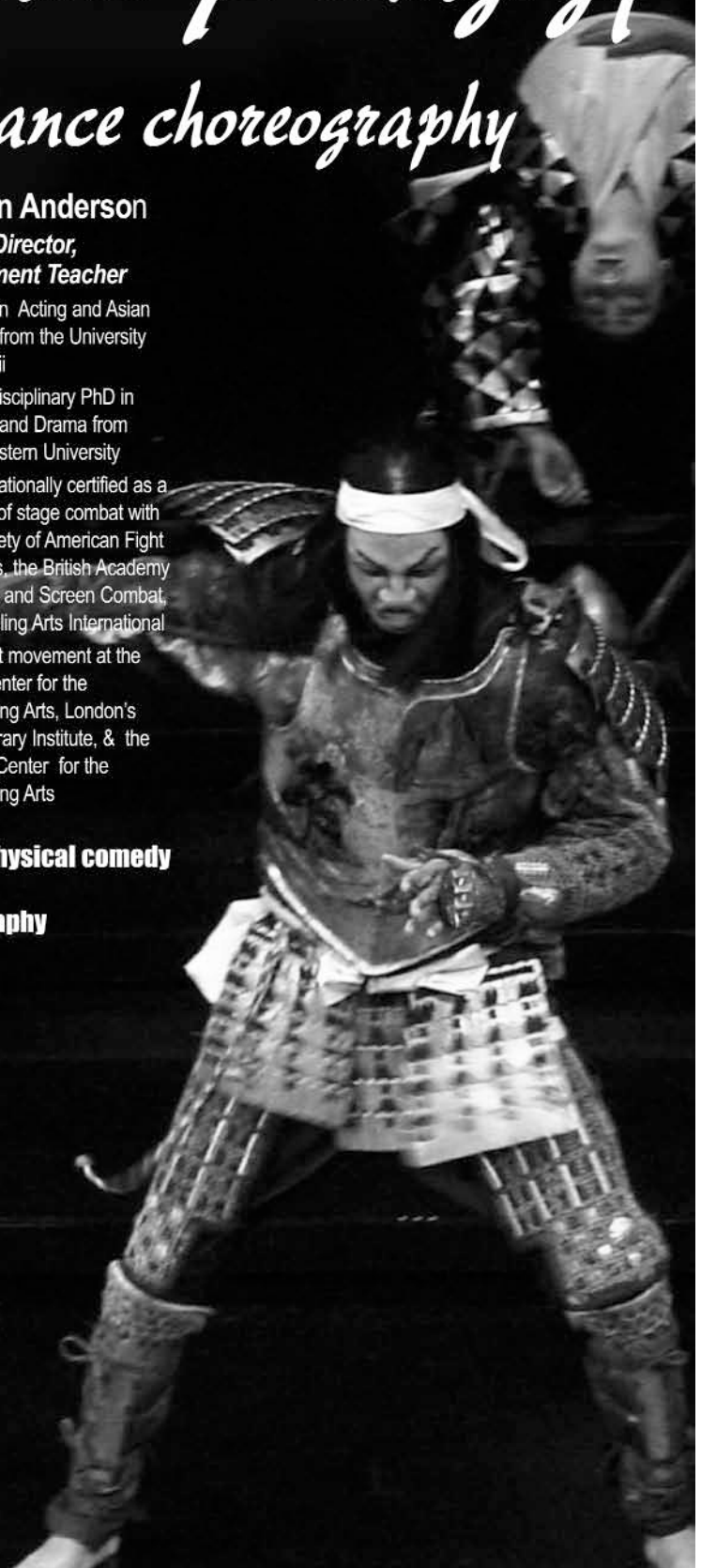
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# DEFIANT ACTS: The End of an Era of Stage Combat in Chicago

by Ryan Lawrence

The Society of American Fight Director's training and certification processes would be useless if artists did not have opportunities to put their skills into action. At the Defiant Theatre of Chicago, stage combat has been a mainstay in the company's production seasons for the past eleven years. In fact, Defiant has arguably provided more opportunities to learn and practice stage combat than any other itinerant company in Chicago's history. And by producing smash hits such as *Action Movie: The Play*, *Sci-Fi Action Movie in Space Prison*, *Flaming Guns of the Purple Sage*, and most recently *The Pyrates*, Defiant has done a fantastic job of bringing stage combat to mainstream audiences.

Defiant has been producing theatre that incorporates stage combat in unique and challenging ways. The creative scope of Defiant productions has made combatants and choreographers from Chicago and abroad eager to add Defiant Theatre to their resumes. Opportunities to work on unique projects have always drawn the fight crowd to Defiant's playground. The company's production history includes action movie spoofs, science fiction adventures, and imaginative treatments of Shakespeare's works. Defiant has given fight directors an ability to move beyond traditional slaps and punches to choreograph fights with gigantic alligators. With large groups of their colleagues, actors have had the pleasure of performing high-falls from intergalactic space trains. This is not traditional stage combat.

Several important reasons exist for documenting Defiant Theatre's recent production of *The Pyrates* in *The Fight Master*. The subject of pirates alone piques the interest of many fight directors. It is a fascinating genre that teems with high-stakes situations typically accompanied with lots of fighting. Defiant's foray into this world is especially interesting as the company has consistently produced work that has elevated theatre and theatrical combat to new levels. Unfortunately, *The Pyrates* is Defiant's final production. For this reason (and many more) Defiant Theatre's recent production of *The Pyrates* is worthy of commendation.

Adapted from George MacDonald Fraser's book by Defiant company members Richard Ragsdale and Justin Fletcher, *The Pyrates* was an "ode to the golden age of piracy and pirate movies." The spectacle was also an ode to stage combat and theatrical stunt work. A massive, moving set played home to group battles, duels, highfalls, and swinging from ropes. The production was underscored with several other technical elements, including puppetry, special effects, make-up, costumes, and hundreds of light, sound, and animated projection cues. It was not uncommon for the thirty-one-person cast (comprised of both veterans and new faces) to perform combat while dancing, wearing gigantic costumes, or controlling a large puppet. Audiences did not just see a duel, but one that occurred with a rock-and-roll score and funky dance

choreography in the background. Because of this, *The Pyrates* boasted some of the greatest theatre artists in Chicago and abroad whose task was to enhance the show's presentation while ensuring the actors' safety.

Defiant called on SAFD and Fight Master veteran David Woolley to choreograph the large number of fights for *The Pyrates*, which included a fort raid, ship battle, galley fight, ballroom duel, dungeon encounter, beach confrontation, and many other sequences. Defiant company member and stage-combat expert Geoff Coates served as Assistant Fight Director. Los Angeles choreographer Andrew Amani coordinated dance and rope work. And one of Chicago's biggest up-and-comers, Kevin Murphy, served as the production's fight captain. Additionally, the play boasted one of the most incredible casts ever to be assembled.

It is not difficult to see why Defiant Theatre has had such a positive impact on the Chicago theatre community. In keeping with its name, the company has always staged original and irreverent works, of which *The Pyrates* is an outstanding example. The troupe has successfully produced plays many other companies avoid. Their unique vision has always kept fans wanting more and awaiting new productions with gleeful anticipation. But after an eleven-year reign as one of the most influential non-equity theatres in Chicago, Defiant Theatre is closing its doors. Chicago audiences have always wondered what Defiant is going to produce next. It is now up to other theatres to fill the space left with Defiant's passing.

## Interview with the Director

Needless to say, developing a production of this scope is not an easy task, even for the talented folks at Defiant. Several obstacles can present themselves when trying to coordinate a production this large. Defiant's handling of this massive production, from writing to stage combat, was recently addressed in an email interview with *Pirates* co-adaptor and director, Justin Fletcher.

**RL:** *What inspired you and Richard Ragsdale to adapt The Pyrates into a play?*

**JF:** *In the fall of 2001, Richard, having long been familiar with Fraser's book, proposed an adaptation of The Pyrates to Defiant for our next season. He only had a few teaser scenes (opening fort raid, Judge Jeffries, Avery and Blood on Dead Man's Chest), but they made a big impression on the company. We decided to go another way with the season, but I couldn't get the adaptation out of my head. I read the book and found one of the funniest, most literate and thrilling novels I'd ever read. The book also confirmed what Richard's teaser scenes had suggested: the material was right up our alley. There was a plethora of combat, an irreverent sense of humor, and a daunting number of characters and loca-*



tions. As our mission statement says, "Defiant Theatre defies fear," and there was nothing more terrifying than the prospect of adapting what should obviously be a blockbuster movie for the confines of the stage. *The Pyrates* was perfect for Defiant.

**RL:** How long did it take to adapt?

**JF:** I bugged Richard repeatedly for eight months or so after his initial proposal, constantly asking for updates on his progress. When it became obvious that the script wasn't a short-term priority for him, I proposed collaboration. He graciously accepted and, with gentlemanly tact and refinement, refrained from punching me for being the pushy oaf that I am. We began in the summer of 2002. We finished three days after opening in the summer of 2004.

**RL:** What were the most difficult obstacles you faced in writing this piece?

**JF:** As I'm sure is true with most adaptations, the hardest part was deciding what to keep and what to discard from the source material. The plot of the script may seem complex and intricate, but it's nothing in comparison with the myriad twists and turns of the book. Our first step was to do a complete scripted version that included every major plot point. It was gigantic. It was easily four to six hours long. In fact, we had originally planned to do the adaptation as two separate productions running in rep, a la *Nicholas Nickleby*. However, the workshop process showed that the script made a better book than a play. It was fun to read, but not dramatically engaging throughout. That was at the end of January 2004. By the auditions in March, Richard and I had pared it down to a one-show, three-act version. We had to jettison at least one major subplot and some of the most beloved characters: Anne Bonney, Solomon Shafit, the Princess of the Sun. That winnowing process continued through the rehearsal process and ended during the second week of performance.

The other major challenge was that much of the novel's meat is contained in the narration. Richard and I agreed that we didn't want a narrator in the show, so we took on the task of putting some of the best lines of the narration in the characters' mouths. We also had to flesh out some key scenes that were only described in the book. Fraser's work combines an authentic period vocabulary with his own comedic sensibilities to create a charmingly unique voice in the novel. Matching our own additions and revisions to match his tone was quite difficult at times.

**RL:** Defiant Theatre is masterful at producing extremely visual and spectacular theatre . . . theatre that many itinerant Chicago companies seem to avoid. Do you have any advice for artists/companies (including the stage-combat community) on how to approach work of this heightened nature? Any advice for solving creative problems and budget issues?

**JF:** A unifying vision is key. An audience will forgive whatever budgetary failings you have as long as you create a consistent world on stage. A rotating, two-story platform is an English man-o'-war? Fine. A tie-dyed piece of muslin is a crashing wave? Great. It doesn't have to look like *The Sea Hawk* or *Pirates of the Caribbean* to get the story across, as long as you have committed actors and a design team working to establish a cohesive envi-

ronment. Don't sacrifice your time or your budget on making one piece look ultra-realistic or amazingly cool to the detriment of the rest of the show.

That said, a lot can be done on a shoestring budget if you think creatively. Surprise will always get the audience on your side. One of the effects that our audience loved was when the aforementioned piece of muslin-wave crashed over one of the actors; when it receded, he was drenched and spit out water towards the house. The total cost for a hidden bucket of water and sponges was negligible, but the effect was dramatic. Going beyond the audience's expectations, even for a moment, can make your low-budget production seem first class.

**RL:** What are your thoughts on safety?

**JF:** In any show, safety should be a paramount concern. In a show such as *The Pyrates* where thirty-one actors are swinging swords around in a confined space, safety is like a deity. Fight choreographers David Woolley and Geoff Coates often stressed that you don't have to be reckless in order to look spectacular on stage. In fact, recklessness nearly always looks sloppy and unimpressive. Speed should also be applied in moderation. Going too fast is not only dangerous, but it increases the possibility that the audience will miss your stunning moves. Graceful and precise movement coupled with committed acting makes for the most convincing, stirring, and safe combat.

Finally, don't give into your fear. Don't let anyone (not even yourself) tell you that something is "unstageable." There is always a way to produce your vision in a manner that an audience can understand and enjoy. The quickest way an audience will turn against you is if they see your fear, whether it be in some half-assed piece of staging or an uninspired, almost apologetic performance. You can do it with a tin can and a paper plate in a storefront or with lavish costumes and props in a multi-million dollar auditorium. You can do it. No excuses.





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**10th ANNIVERSARY**

# FIGHT DIRECTION IN MUSICAL THEATRE

## "And--Thrust, 2, 3, 4, Parry, 6, 7, 8"

by Sean Boyd

**T**he musical combat sequence is an interesting nut to crack. Often left to the dance choreographer, it requires a balance of forces different from that of classical or straight play scenario. Last summer I worked as the fight director for the Sacramento Music Circus for their productions of *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel* directed by Glenn Casale. I offer the following reflections on the experience and the process in hopes that they might help others who are fortunate enough to direct a musical fight.

### TIME IS ON YOUR SIDE--OR IS IT?

The fight director is often allotted the least amount of time in any given rehearsal period, especially during the extremely tight schedule of summer stock. In the rehearsal schedule for a musical the added factors of the music and dance rehearsals come into play. The production is, after all, a musical and much of the focus in early rehearsals is given to the music. Also, the sheer number of entrances, exits, dance numbers, set changes, and cast members in the standard musical makes borrowing time from the blocking and dance rehearsals difficult at best and impossible at worse.

Another drain on the fight director's time is Equity. Equity's rehearsal rules guarantee actors breaks and lunches. If the actor is performing in one show at night, he or she can only be called to rehearsal for half a day during that day. And if the actor is scheduled for two shows on one day, the rehearsal time is even more restricted. While the Equity actor may be grateful for all of that, the fight director, with only twelve days of rehearsal to put together a huge fight, may cringe at the thought.

Having been hired as both an actor and fight director for *Pirates* and *Pimpernel*, I was able to straddle the schedules and work with the leads of *Pimpernel* (who were not the leads in *Penzance*) during the day and captain the fights and perform at night in *Penzance*. If you are not so fortunate as to have that double-duty, be prepared to cram five hours of information and teaching into one or two hours. In the end, count and broker the overall rehearsal time in minutes and hours, not days. Even a director as generous and understanding as Glenn Casale could only give the fight director so much time.

### ROUGH BUT READY--AND NEW PLAYERS

Of course, in the perfect world, one would know something about the actors, designers, and directors participating in a production. Sometimes the fight director has this information, but with the musical new players enter the picture--the music director and dance choreographer. The fight director's vision must be flexible enough to incorporate these two important people and to adapt to new and crucial considerations, such as the conductor's cuing the

performers to sing or the choreographer's positioning the actors in a dance number that precedes or follows the fight. It is important for the fight director to get to know these two individuals immediately.

Also, the musical is usually a lush spectacle that includes many set pieces, costume pieces, and people adorning the stage. In such a situation, the fight director who sets down an idea on the paper, scores it out, and presents it at the first opportunity in rehearsal is bound to be disappointed. Instead, the fight director should be just ready enough. He or she should have an idea but expect to edit it. Remember the fight director may have to teach a full chorus of one or two dozen individuals how to fight, as was the case in *Pirates of Penzance*, so one needs to be ready but loose.

### NEW CONSIDERATIONS

When creating the fight, be kind, especially if it is a big, climactic fight at the end of a two-and-a-half hour musical like *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, in which the leads have sung almost twenty songs between them. A person can do only so much. *The Pirates of Penzance* was no less demanding of its actors. In fact, just before the final fight involving all thirty members of the cast, the pirates have sung the bombastic "With Cat Like Tread" (with its huge modulation at the end) and "Sighing Softly." The cops, pirates, and daughters have all made major entrances and exits just before the fight as well. The last thing the fight director should do is kill them in a fight which segues into yet another musical number, then another, then finally a big dance ending.

Treated well, dancers can be lifesavers for the fight director. Although the fight director might have some trepidation walking into a production featuring two dozen dancers with little or no combat experience, he or she will quickly find that, in general, they are some of the most physically talented performers and quickest learners. They earn their living making the most complicated move look easy and enjoyable, so stage combat is not hard for them to grasp. They also will more than likely take to it with great fervor, since it is so different from what they are used to doing.

More problematic is timing the fights. The phrases of the music and tempo will dictate how the fight must progress. Thus, the fight director has to count out his or her fight--every step, move, parry, pause-- in musical beats, not in the passing of time or number of moves or even acting beats. This is the most difficult element to manage if one does not have a background in music. In such an event, the fight director can get the choreographer or music director to help him or her. Adapting the fight to the music will save a great deal of time in teaching the fight because everyone will know what they are doing during every beat.



One of the first things the fight director should consider is the length of the fight music. The fight director needs to find a recording or have someone play the music for him or her when the score is received. Ideally, he or she should work with the music director before the rehearsals start to establish the length of the score for the fight.

Also, the fight director needs to be aware of a new sight line for the actors. Stage lines and pictures are critical, but in the musical it is of paramount importance that the actors and the conductor be able to communicate visually. Tempo, accents, cut-offs, in fact, all cues are given by the conductor. Although the cues might never be used, the fight director must allow for them. The set design needs to be examined early to ensure the sight line is clear.

Likewise, the actors must be able to hear the music. They must be able to follow the counts and phrases of the music. After all, the combat serves as the vocals for the music. If the actors cannot hear the music, the fight is going to lose all of its integrity. On the other hand, the actors can hear and feel the music, they will be able to get back on track if something goes awry. Monitors and orchestra volume, as well as stage placement, contribute to the sound of the music. The fight director needs to schedule a rehearsal with the orchestra and full sound so he or she can make any adjustments to help the actors with the music.

## HOW DID IT END?

The Sacramento Music Circus stage is a thirty-foot, elevating and sectioned disk, with an elevating inner circle about eight feet in diameter, surrounded by an auditorium in the round with twenty-five hundred seats. Although the general setting was the same, the climactic fights for *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel* differed completely regarding style, number of participants, and manipulation of this space.

The entire cast of twenty-five people participated in the fight of *The Pirates of Penzance*. To ensure everyone was seen and out of the way of the other actors, I placed pairs (pirate and cop) around the clock of the stage at equidistant points and the leaders of each band (the pirate king and the police sergeant) on the elevated circular riser in the center. Once in place, each pair was assigned their own choreography, starting with the same basic four moves: attack (or defend) arm, arm, leg, leg. Each move took two musical counts. So everyone was not doing the same thing at the same time, the police in some pairs started the attack, while in others, the pirates initiated the action. Additionally, some actors would attack the left arm first, and the others the right. This was done to give all fourteen actors a similar starting point. If a cross took longer than expected or a billy-club got dropped or caught on a costume, the actors could still use the eight counts to get back on track.

After the eight counts, each pair had its unique choreography depending on the strength of their skills as fighters and movers. Some were given lifts, others groin kicks, and others moves which fit the Keystone Cops nature of their characters. High above this

circle of fools were the pirate king and the police sergeant, fighting in an even more comically exaggerated fashion. Since the center elevation was almost two-feet higher than the rest of the stage, their fight had to stand-out.

Each pair had four, eight-count sets of fight moves left after the opening sequence of arm, arm, leg, leg. On the fifth set of eight, a new balance had to be found when the daughters enter the fracas to save the pirates. The daughters had eight counts to cross around the circle carefully to their pirate partner during the fight. Each daughter had been paired with a specific pirate for the waltz at the end of the play. To keep everyone as safe as possible, a turn was given to each pair in which every policeman put their respective pirate into a dire advantaged corps-a-corps position or set the pirate for a coup de grace

The fight ended with an accented sixth beat of the last set of eight counts. At this moment, each daughter bonked the policeman with her respective pirate, thus saving the pirates. The daughters had to be in place on time since the very next set of eight counts began the song "We Triumph Now," sung by the pirates. If any daughter missed her cue or cross, she could not save her pirate and the pirate would not triumph. It was necessary for everyone to be in their position exactly at the sixth beat to ensure the success of the fight, song, and story. Only by setting every move to a corresponding musical count could everyone be guaranteed to make it into place and correctly begin the song every time. In spite of the crowd of actors, everyone had a good sight line at twelve o'clock to the conductor.

All of this orchestrated chaos played beautifully into the music and style of the play. Even the stagnant sounding "each move to a beat" nature of the fight was hidden in the overall style, creating an excellent blend of comedy and action and, most important, safety.

On the other side of the coin was the final fight for *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. No one was on the stage except for the characters in the fight: Percy (the scarlet pimpernel), Chauvalin, and Margarete. Just off the stage, in the four aisles used for entrances, were ten guards, two at one o'clock and seven o'clock, three at five o'clock and eleven o'clock. Although these men were clear of the fight they did present mild sightline problems for the audience. The solution to this was to use the entire thirty-foot diameter of the stage and multiple angles of attack. As a result, everyone in the audience experienced the fight, even if guards blocked part of it.

One of the most difficult aspects of staging the fight was integrating cued moments of dialogue with the music. In general, the fight phrases were loosely blocked to the count of the music. Phrases were broken down into acting beats and those beats were then divided into the counts. The phrases leading into and coming out of the moments of dialogue had built in buffer-beats so the actors and music could stay synchronized. This was done more for the conductor than the actors, for the moments of dialogue were underscored by a repeatable vamp. In a rare moment, the

conductor actually took his cue for the orchestra from the actors, not just from their line but from the attack which began the next phrase. This required a clear line from twelve o'clock to the actors so the conductor could see. Moreover, the actors had to be at an angle to the conductor.

Stylistically, this fight is often played heavily on the side of comedy. However, this production was geared more toward the drama of the story, and the director and producers made it very clear that the fight should bring the play to a fever pitch for the guillotine beheading of the scarlet pimpernel, which took place just after the fight. This dictated a looser, less structured feel in the fight. Fortunately, the three actors involved came from strong movement backgrounds and the two men had a great deal of fight experience. In fact, the actor who played Chauvalin had played the character on tour in over five hundred shows. All of that experience was invaluable in the development of the fight and getting it locked in during the short rehearsal period. The actors' experience as fighters also enabled them to generate a fresh sense of danger in the fight every night.

#### STILL PLAY WITH THE OLD RULES

The basic issues of any fight scene are also those of a fight in a musical: eye contact, preparation, action, reaction and, of course, distance and "on" and "off" lines. Safety is always critical. The dynamics of rhythm and tempo tell as much when linked to counts as when not. In the end, nothing is actually sacrificed; instead new issues simply encourage new ways of thinking about and creating a fight. The fight director will find that the old adage holds true: necessity is the mother of invention. When a fight director in a musical allows his or her ideas to meld with the dictates of the music, the fight moves will flow in concert with the soundtrack that punctuates them.



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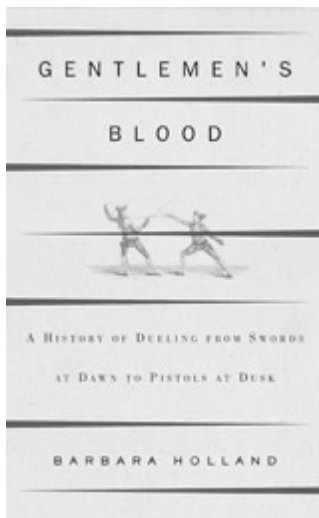
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# The Pen and the Sword



## **GENTLEMEN'S BLOOD: A HISTORY OF DUELING FROM SWORDS AT DAWN TO PISTOLS AT DUSK**

Holland, Barbara. *Gentlemen's Blood: A History of Dueling From Swords at Dawn to Pistols at Dusk*. Bloomsbury Publishing: New York, 2003. Paperback \$14.95.

What was the outcome of a duel in 1400 between the Chevalier Maquer and a dog? Why would the Vice-President of the United States challenge and then kill a former Secretary of the Treasury in a duel? Who were the fiercest duelers? When was the last recorded duel in France? These are only a few of the questions answered in Barbara Holland's fun and informative *Gentlemen's Blood: A History of Dueling From Swords at Dawn to Pistols at Dusk*.

In her book, Holland takes the reader through a whirlwind tour of the history of the duel starting with its romantic beginnings as an alternative to "the informal ambush, or sending out henchmen to break the enemy's skull by night or on a highway." Rules were established and strictly adhered to by men of honor and respect. Though the weapons and rules changed, the code behind the duel remained a con-

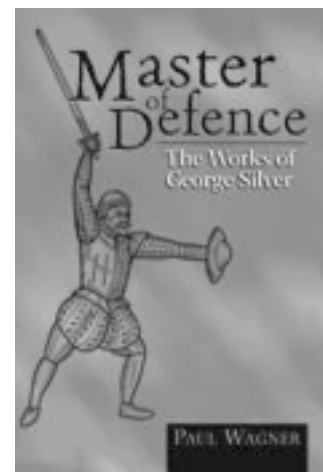
stant. Originating in 501 with Gindebald, the king of the Burgundians, it spread across the European continent, was taken up fiercely in the British Isles, and was transported across the ocean into the New World. In *Gentlemen's Blood*, Holland sweeps one

through dueling history with exciting accounts of some the most famous and not so famous duels in history.

One of Holland's key strategies is to combine information about dueling with fascinating insights into the lives of some of history's most famous figures. For example, in the chapter "Russian Soul," the reader learns the history of dueling in Russia through the life of Alexander Pushkin, a famous Russian writer and national hero who entered into an ill-fated duel with Frenchman Baron D'Anthes. The reader gains a glimpse into the hearts and minds of men willing to die rather than lose face among members of their society. This psychological component of *Gentlemen's Blood* makes the book valuable for anyone studying stage combat. In stage combat one often asks, "What would make my character so angry that he (or she) would pick up a sword and try to kill another person?" Understanding the rules and cannons of a culture is a big step towards answering that question.

The one weak part of *Gentlemen's Blood* is the afterward. After spending 284 pages challenging the reasons and sanity of two individuals who would attempt to kill one another, Holland suddenly looks back wistfully on the virtues of the duel. She even suggests that "a chance for personal vengeance would defuse some of the tensions in the world." While one might understand the thought behind her argument, it seems a confusing addition to an otherwise stellar history of the duel.

Thomas C. Turner



## **MASTER OF DEFENCE: THE WORKS OF GEORGE SILVER**

Wagner, Paul, ed. *Master of Defence: The Works of George Silver*. Paladin Press: Boulder, Colorado, 2003. \$30

Paul Wagner's recently published *Master of Defence: The Works of George Silver* brings George Silver's two works into a totally new perspective. His *Paradoxes of Defence* in 1599 and his *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, which was not published until 1898, are examined from the point of view of a martial artist who has set out to prove Silver's theories. His *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence* is compared to Musashi's *Book of Five Rings*. Silver wrote his two books with a clarity of purpose. He lays down a codified set of principles that becomes clear and not so contentious to today's martial artist.

Silver's system is simplicity itself. Compared to other styles of combat, it is exceptionally easy to learn, theoretically sound, and robust. Silver lays out his philosophy in the context of single combat in terms of general and specific principles. Ironically, although Silver's style was straightforward, pragmatic and devastatingly effective, it was unfashionable in his day. While having virtually no influence on the development of English fencing, Silver is probably the single most widely read source in historical fencing, mainly because his work was in English. Wagner not only reproduces Silver's two texts in this book but places Silver in his time with his weaponry while relating his influence as evidenced in the plays of Shakespeare.

Among the contributors to this work are

Stephen Hand and Mark Hillyard. Hand gives a brief background to the works of Silver and co-authors an essay on "The Untrue Weapon". One potentially confusing element in Silver's works is the language, which includes words with multiple connotations. This issue is addressed by Mark Hillyard, whose essay "Silver's Principles and Practice" defines the terms that Silver uses, clarifies their meaning for today's reader, and details their effect within a fight. Placed in this new light, Silver is seen as not just ridiculing the Italians of his day and their thrusting style of fencing, but as actually putting forth a sound treatise on his style of fencing in his world.

In his essay on Silver's armory, Wagner examines the specific weaponry of the day and explains the function and uses of various weapons, from the short sword, dagger, sword and buckler, and sword and target to staff weapons, such as the quarter-staff, Welsh hook, two handed sword, longsword, rapier and armor. It is clear that Silver knew how to use the rapier, as seen in the challenge that he and his brother Toby made against the Italians Saviolo and Jeronimo. While he grudgingly respects the Spanish style of fencing, he clearly finds the Italian style flawed.

Brief Instructions was a handwritten manuscript that was never meant to be published in its existing form. In fact, the manuscript remained unpublished until it was discovered in 1890 in the British Museum by a W. London. London transcribed the manuscript and sent it to Captain Alfred Hutton who in 1897 encouraged Colonel Cyril G. R. Matthey to check the transcript against the original manuscript with the result that it was published in 1898, along with Paradoxes of Defence, in a single volume entitled The Works of George Silver. In the original manuscript Silver had crossed out lines and inserted new ones. Wagner attempts to present this work as it might have been meant to be published in Silver's own lifetime. Silver's Brief Instructions includes illustrations in the style and character of the woodcuts in Paradoxes of Defence. Without Silver's Brief Instructions one would not have the understanding of medieval and Renaissance swordsmanship.

It has taken four hundred years for Silver to be appreciated. His two works are prob-

ably the most complete Western work on the principles of combat ever written.

Linda Carlyle McCollum



**THE RENAISSANCE DRILL BOOK**  
Greenhill Books in London and  
Stockpole Books: London and  
Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, 2003.  
\$24.95.

Jacob de Gheyn's *The Exercise of Armes* has been translated by David J. Blackmore of *The Royal Armouries* as *The Renaissance Drill Book*. This fascinating seventeenth-century military manual was designed to instruct the soldier on how to handle arms by analyzing the movements required to load and fire guns and to use the pike most effectively. Its illustrations clearly demonstrate the drill for soldiers using three weapons: the musket which was loaded from a bandoleer and placed on a fork stand for firing; the caliver or harquebus, a lighter, smaller-bore longarm, which was loaded from a flask and did not require the use of the rest; and the pike, which was manipulated through various movements and postures. The book resulted in smaller more maneuverable infantry units that had a better use of firearms and greater rate of fire. A section on cavalry exercise was also completed but never included in the published text.

First published in 1607 at The Hague and not reprinted until 1640, the drills became common throughout seventeenth-century Europe. The book was inspired by Johann

II of Nassau, a German prince who had studied military works from classical antiquity and observed actual warfare in the Netherlands. He developed this important new concept for the organization and training of troops when drills were almost unknown in European armies.

De Gheyn's copper engravings are the essence of the step-by-step instructions for training foot soldiers in handling the weapons. The illustrations were done in 1597 under Johann's guidance, but ten years elapsed before the work was published. The two reasons given for this delay are that the Dutch military authorities saw no need for an exercise manual and that they feared the techniques would fall into the hands of potential enemies. Once it was published, it was an immediate success and was translated into several languages and inspired a host of imitations and pirated editions. Johann's military reforms were adopted by nations all over Europe.

The drills were in three parts. The first consisted of the rigorous drilling required until the actions became automatic for the soldier. In the second phase, the depth of military units was reduced to ten ranks. The third phase introduced the counter march during which the soldier, after firing from the front rank, turned right and marched to the rear of the unit to reload while the new first rank, whose guns were already loaded, fired.

*The Exercise of Armes* became a milestone in military history for the quality of its illustrations rather than its content. Blackmore has translated the captions from the text and inserted them under each illustration. None of the text is included in this edition.

If one does not have the facsimile edition of 1971 of De Gheyn's *Exercise of Armes*, with is commentary by J. B. Kist, then Blackmore's edition is of value for the meticulous accuracy portrayed in the uniforms and the weapons.

Linda Carlyle McCollum



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# The Search for Style in *TROY*

*by Michael Kirkland*



Swordmaster Richard Ryan (left) and Buster Reeves (right) demonstrate the Achilles/Hector fight from the Warner Bros. film *TROY*. Photograph by Gary Beach. Used under authorization.





## Editor's Note:

*This interview took place at the Junction Tavern in north central London and Richard Ryan's home in Dartmouth Park.*

Richard Ryan had only recently returned to London from an extended stint as swordmaster on director Wolfgang Petersen's cinematic adaptation of Homer's epic poem *The Iliad*, a classic tale of lust, love, betrayal, and retribution re-titled *TROY*. Although the film contains some impressive mass battle scenes staged by stunt coordinator Simon Crane and his assistant Wade Eastwood, the much-coveted responsibility of staging the featured one-on-one fights involving the principal characters fell to Richard Ryan, a gifted fight director sought after by many of the United Kingdom's most respected regional and West End venues. *TROY* marks his first foray into the realm of feature films funded and produced by major Hollywood studios.

Ryan is a soft-spoken man, but his animated gestures and the

almost palpable electric spark behind his brown eyes speak to the passion he has for the topic of the conversation: stage combat-swordplay, in particular. Ryan's connection with the project began with an unexpected phone call from Wade Eastwood, who wanted to know if he would be "interested in coming out to Pinewood Studios and auditioning to stage the fights for an upcoming Wolfgang Petersen project."

He asked if I could I come in for an interview the following week. He said I'd be there for about an hour and half to meet with him and Simon Crane and I would have to choreograph a fight. He told me that they were there finishing up the *Lara Croft* sequel, that Simon Crane and his crew would finish in a couple of weeks and begin work on *TROY* the following Monday. Naturally, I said, 'Yes.'

When Ryan met with Wade Eastwood, he was astonished to hear Eastwood say, "Stunt-coordinator Simon Crane and I are pretty much determined on seeing all the fight directors in the UK." Ryan was even more surprised to discover they did not plan to interview venerated fight arranger Bill Hobbs<sup>2</sup>. But this decision had nothing to do with Hobbs' skill, as Ryan quickly made clear.

They were specifically looking for somebody new who they hoped would bring something fresh or different, and they didn't want the fight director, or their previous work, to be more important than the fights. Other than that particular big dog, they were going to see pretty much all the fight directors in the UK.

The audition began in earnest with Ryan receiving a scenario to choreograph and an outline and being paired up with a couple of stunt men. Ryan continued, "So I started to choreograph a sword and shield fight, and I do-well, what I do." In a characteristically candid moment he admitted, "Ironically enough, when we did our SAFD Teacher Training Workshop in '92, we had to inform the instructors what we thought our weakest weapon was. I said, 'Sword and shield.' Naturally that's the style they then gave me



*The first clash between the forces of Troy and the infamous Mermaidons from the Warner Bros. film TROY. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.*



*The forces of Troy struggle to keep the Spartans at bay in the Warner Bros. film TROY. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.*





*The forces of Troy find themselves with no other option but to retreat from the infamous Mermidons in the Warner Bros. film TROY. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.*

when we were required to choreograph a test fight." Ryan offered the following account about the audition:

I started to choreograph some bits. I had made a few notes about what he [Eastwood] had talked about--the bits that stuck out--the critical elements of the story that I needed to be in there. I worked on it for a while and then he came in and did the classic director thing--he slightly changed things on me. Now whether it was to see if I'm adaptable or whether I could take direction or--I just don't know. But I interpreted it to be as when I was an actor and was asked, 'Can you do it differently?' I took on board what he wanted as best I could. He gave me a little feedback. . . and so I tried to eliminate the things he didn't like and find more of the flavor of the ones he did.

Ryan left the encounter cautiously optimistic of his chances. However, if he was hoping to land the job on the first go-round, he soon discovered that was not to be. The weekend came and went. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday came in quick succession. On Thursday afternoon he finally received a call: could he come in the very next day? Ryan noted, "They were working on two other films and busy on other stuff. It seems they were involved in their world and the things they had to do. . . and not in Richard's little world." Eastwood informed him that if all went well at the next session, "he would start on Monday morning on a trial basis for a week."

So once again, Ryan buckled up and prepared to do battle for what he hoped would be a plum directing assignment. He arrived to quite a surprise.

I read the script. I didn't have to do a recall with the two stunt men after all. But I was to start on Monday morning on a trial basis for a week, and that was it! That was March 10, and from March 10 to December 22, I was on that movie. However, on March 10 I didn't know that

was going to be the case. I was just hoping to make it until March 15.

What exactly is Ryan's process for the staging of a fight? Is there a specific *Ryan Methodology*? An approach or system he follows? In fact, this Bristol Old Vic-trained actor relies upon the same sort of analysis he used when performing a role<sup>3</sup>.



*Achilles (Brad Pitt) shows his ability to handle multiple opponents with ease during the attack on Troy in the film TROY. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.*





*The climactic fight between Hector (Eric Bana, left) and Brad Pitt (right). Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.*

I do what my actor training taught me to do. I sit there with a notepad and make notes. If something suggests itself about a situation or character, I just write it down. And sometimes you end up with completely contradictory jottings as the characters go through different scenes. That may be because the character or writing is contradictory. Over the weekend, between Friday and Monday, I spent all my time searching through all my stage combat books. I was on the Internet . . . looking at any Greek artwork I could find, searching for anything, any images to give me a starting point, a way in. So on Monday morning I had a few things in mind. I didn't have specific choreography worked out--but I had certain specific images.

A frequently repeated refrain by some of the critics of the film is that Wolfgang Petersen and screenwriter David Benioff strayed significantly from salient aspects of Homer's original plot, which included a range of Olympian gods inserting themselves into the action in an overt, personal, and often clumsy way. In stark contrast to Homer's work, Benioff's screenplay offers virtually no supernatural involvement. After scoffing at the idea that anyone should even raise an eyebrow at the notion of "Hollywood departing from an original storyline when adapting it for film," Ryan provided some insight into how Petersen and Benioff approached the topic of Achilles being the supernatural product of a coupling between the goddess Thetis, and the mortal Peleus, one of Jason's infamous Argonauts<sup>4</sup>:

Even though the movie wasn't going the way of gods, Peterson and Benioff wanted to give Achilles that kind

of--well, to move part way towards that, without making him fantastical. So I had to include that in my brief. I had a couple of ideas of certain moves we might try and ways his fighting style might be different than the others. But it was all still theoretical and had to be worked out in the mix.

Ryan casually picked up the narrative with his first day on the job on Monday morning. He found himself somewhat awkwardly paired with two stunt men who apparently were also "on trial." While they were all wondering what was going to happen to them and whether they would actually even get to work on the film, they tentatively began to chip away at choreographing "the big one"-what was destined to become the Achilles/Hector fight:

We were working on the major fight, but none of us were really working on the movie yet. If Peterson and the others didn't like what we did, we might be let go. It was fairly high pressure but I got

lucky. I got a couple of really good performers, one of whom was exceptional, who were able to take some of what I choreographed and make it look better than I'd visualized it. You really can't ask for much more than that.

At this point Ryan revealed some of the process he used to determine each of the principal combatants' unique fighting style.

The notes I had written down stated that Achilles is supposed to move fast, but that needed to be in the choreography because they didn't want to speed up action in the camera. Indeed, he had to look like it was effortless, easy. Other characters wouldn't realize he was moving quite so fast until it was too late. So I noted some images. I listed "Carl Lewis," and "Bob Beamon" next to 'long jump' and 'triple jump' because that is what they both did. Carl Lewis was a particularly strong image for me



*Achilles (Brad Pitt, right) stabs Hector (Eric Bana, left). Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.*



because he ran really, really fast without any apparent effort. He just kind of went 'whoosh.' I also wrote down 'speed skater' because speed skaters have something similar in the way they move. And I wrote down things about different characters--next to Achilles' name I wrote "mercurial" because that was the impression I got from the script. I looked at artwork and various images-- 'Hercules,' 'Atlas,' and *Who's Who in the Greek World*--and I didn't know what I was going to do. All I was looking for was a key to get in. 'Mercurial,' led me to the Greek god 'Mercury.' I had an image of winged Mercury in the air. I also had another complementary image of Carl Lewis doing the triple jump. Why not combine them? The initial fight between Achilles and Boagrius<sup>5</sup> set Achilles' style. Achilles could start at a slow tempo then pick it up like you see a triple jumper do and then he gets into his stride and then "boom, boom, bang. . . kill."



*The climactic fight between Hector (Eric Bana, left) and Brad Pitt (right) with several crew members surrounding them. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.*



*(Eric Bana, left) in the leg in the Warner Bros. film TROY. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.*

Although he had quickly immersed himself in research, Ryan was yet to know if his Olympic track-and-field/speed-skating images could actually be translated into something that would convey the freshness stunt coordinator Simon Crane was seeking. Nevertheless, Ryan and his team of two stunt men continued to labor, doggedly seeking out that inspired key that would open the door into the Achilles/Hector fight.

The Achilles/Hector fight had to be spear and shield, sword and shield, and it had to progress. Of course, in Greek warfare the spear is used for throwing. But you just can't go, 'I throw a spear at Hector and Hector throws a spear at me--the end.' I knew the spear and shield section would serve to set the tone of the fight and the thing I used to get me into the fight was the speed-skater image. I went (skated) from one side to the other<sup>6</sup>, thrust the spear, and missed because Hector avoided it. So Achilles

attacked him with the edge of the shield and Hector blocked it but it knocked him back. I started from that one move, and hopefully (in the film) it shows Achilles' speed and grace, but also Hector's stature as an opponent. Then I used the image (Mercury/Carl Lewis). I said, 'At this point you run over and you jump up and bam!'<sup>7</sup> I then demonstrated it. Buster Reeves, one of the stunt men, who happens to be an ex-world kick boxing champion, grinned and said, 'What? Do you mean something like this?' And he was twice, three times as high as I could jump.

Of course, Ryan admitted that with a different stunt man, the move might not have succeeded. He was, as he said, "lucky."

But luck was only a small factor that contributed to the beauty of the battles in *TROY*. More important was the creativity Ryan brought to the project. As described in the *Iliad*, he fought between Achilles and Hector lacks the visual power necessary for the big screen.

Departing slightly from the original narrative of the fight, Ryan came up with an imaginative way to combine salient aspects of Homer's description with his own vision of the death of Hector. Whereas Hector is killed exclusively by spear in Homer's epic, in *TROY*, the battle progresses from spear and shield to sword and shield. The kill ends up being executed with both sword and a spear, but not at all in a manner one might expect. Like Homer, Ryan incorporated a *deus ex machina* device:<sup>8</sup> the shortened remnant of Hector's own spear, its shaft having been broken earlier in the fight. The inspired Hector spontaneously improvises as he scoops the broken spear off the field of battle. He then uses it in



a dazzling two-handed phrase that climaxes as Achilles steals the broken spear out of his hands, spins, and thrusts Hector's own spear deeply into Hector's right shoulder. Not only has Hector been bested, he has been wounded unto death with his own weapon. After Hector begs him not to defile his corpse, Achilles



Swordmaster Richard Ryan (right) works through a particular move with Achilles (Brad Pitt, left) during shooting of the Warner Bros. film TROY. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.

replies with a terse, two-handed sword thrust to the Trojan champion's heart. This move clearly mirrors the thrust Hector uses to end the life of Achilles' adored and hapless cousin Patroclus in an earlier confrontation.

Ryan picked up the story of his participation in *TROY* with an account of how he and the two stunt men assigned to him began to work on the fight between Achilles and Hector. Interestingly enough, the three of them quickly developed an open working relationship that allowed them to discuss ideas freely. Some were kept, others discarded according to what they thought would work for the characters, the situation, and the structural placement each fight occupies in the film. Ryan was painfully aware, even on his first day on the job, that the Achilles/Hector fight was to be "the fight of all fights. It's the Macbeth/McDuff fight. . . the death of kings. . . the big moment. Their world will change after this fight."

While Ryan and his associates grappled with the task, Eastwood kept popping in from time to time and offering feedback. But after seeing only an initial showing, stunt coordinator/second unit director Simon Crane was unexpectedly called out of the country. The production team had decided to move filming from Morocco to Mexico, largely due to the terrorist turmoil emerging in the wake of the liberation of Iraq. Crane was off to Mexico for the remainder of the week to scout out locations for the film. Ryan continued to work through the week with no idea if Crane, upon his return, would like the results. Ryan lamented, "You know, it was about as stressful as any situation I had ever encountered." But he also added,

Before Simon left, he came and watched the fight. The

fight, at that stage, didn't travel very much. I guess I was focusing on choreographing for the camera too much. Simon recognized this and said, 'Richard, you choreograph the fight you need to choreograph and I'll film it. Let me worry about all that. Just don't censor or edit yourself.'

Suddenly Ryan had an epiphany. Crane's encouragement had led him to a clearer understanding of not only what they were looking for but why he had been hired as sword master.

I thought, 'They've hired me because I have a theatre background. And they want somebody who is used to working with actors, so he can coach the actors. They want to do it *in a more theatrical style*.' In looking for something new, they actually were looking backwards to the movies of the forties and fifties; they wanted to do longer takes, wider shots. Not just quick, fast edit but close-ups. So I just choreographed it like I was choreographing for a huge stage. I tried to incorporate the various images I had written down that suggested Greek mythology-sometimes images with just the most tenuous of links, like Atlas. Atlas is typically portrayed as carrying the world on his shoulders. I thought, 'Well, Achilles is carrying the hopes of Agamemnon's world on *his* shoulders.' This led me to an image of the shield up behind Achilles' neck<sup>9</sup>.

In fact, many famous images of Atlas depict the Titan god crouching, bowed, even on one knee, straining to balance and support the weight of the world as it nestles in the hollow between his neck and shoulders. Ryan took this image and adapted it for Achilles in the form of the lunge, an aggressive derivative of the crouch and a technique perhaps more typical of the Renaissance than Ancient Greece. Ryan added that the crouching style Achilles uses when striding and gliding towards an enemy came "from the speed-skating imagery. And anybody who knows me knows that I like lunges. I think it's a very dynamic move."

The focus of the conversation then shifted from the choreography to the actors who had to perform it. Brad Pitt's performance of the choreography exhibited a slightly heightened stylistic component not required by the other actors-and Pitt had clearly risen to the challenge. Ryan, commented:

He's a very methodological learner. He really loves to explore and was an incredibly hard worker. Perhaps one of the hardest workers I've ever encountered, in terms of the effort he would put into rehearsing and performing the fights. He was quite tough on himself. He was always ready to do another take or rehearsal and try to develop on the previous one. He was always searching to improve and I think the final result is a testament to this.

Little doubt exists that Pitt exhibits a strong, physical grace in the film, an athleticism that is simultaneously aesthetically pleasing, masculine, and seasoned with only the slightest whiff of arrogance. Exhibited by someone else, his command and sense of style would perhaps have smacked of the telltale signs of hard work and effort. Pitt's performance of the choreography leaves

one with the sense that Achilles' effortless style is a natural outgrowth of innate genius. Ryan also praised Pitt's innate ability to take ownership of the choreography.

There's a two-second moment in the film in the fight with Patroclus. In the beginning, in the sort of training/play fight, there's a bit when Odysseus is riding up and Achilles walks over and using his foot flips up the spear and turns it over and throws it-- whoosh!<sup>10</sup> I spent about an hour and a half, two hours, if not more, figuring out where your foot needed to go, how you needed to flick it, where the point of balance was. But before I had figured this out, the spear hit the ground many times. It also thumped my elbow and hit me on the side of the head. I showed the move to Pitt. He got it the first time, second time, third time. I was thinking, 'Oh, come on! No! At least drop it.' He's just a really good physical actor with a wonderful sense of style. A willingness to explore, not just mimic what is shown to him but to understand why he is doing it. In Achilles' style a lot of ingredients were thrown into the mix, including the imagery, that weren't absolutely necessary for him to learn. But he was hungry for all that--because he loves it, because he's an actor with an actor's instincts. By the time we filmed them, Pitt performed the fights better than the double in everything. And all that was a result of the fact that he was an incredibly hard worker. That temple fight?<sup>11</sup> He and I would be on the temple steps. And we'd do three and four-hour rehearsal sessions, baking in the Mexican sun. We did that for about two weeks--he and I meeting nearly every day, with me playing all twenty-seven people that he killed.

In fact, Ryan believes that he had a great group of gifted actors to work with, including the Australian Eric Bana. Fresh from the previous summer's comic-book-inspired hit film *The Hulk*, Bana was cast as Hector. As with Pitt's Achilles, Bana's Hector had to capture the spirit as well as the physical prowess of the character.

The script showed that Hector would not give up no matter how tough the situation. He would do his duty. He would keep getting up and going on and never yield. That became the imagery for developing Hector's style. I didn't go for any of the showier moves or the leaps like Achilles' signature moves. Hector's signature move was his strength of heart, his emotional strength, his courage. So you see him overcome greater odds a lot of the time. He's fought battles, he's seen combat before--he knows how difficult it is. He goes in, he steels himself and does what needs to be done. This presented a different sort of problem because there weren't any concrete images to latch onto. It's tricky because you are creating an adaptable style that is dependent upon the situation as much as character. Hector is opportunistic; if there's an opportunity to win, he goes for the opportunity. He commits to what's there, what's happening now. He is often the only one to see a situation for what it is--he's a realist. He's not involved in empire building or how history will see him, but in the everyday. To some degree, he is everyman. So that's not so much a style as character attributes. And that is the difficulty of the final fight. You have to try, on the one hand, to show that Achilles has this wonderful 'apotheosis of martial grace,' but you can't make Hector a mug either. He's still got to be really good. I hoped to show that by allowing Hector the opportunity to improvise. He gets knocked down, he picks himself up, he rolls, he grabs, he punches--he deals with whatever is happening right now.

When watching this climactic duel to the death, one is struck by how Achilles appears to be always one step ahead of Hector but not in a way that makes Hector look amateurish. One particularly memorable moment reveals a spinning Achilles attempting a horizontal cut that sweeps harmlessly over the ducking Hector's head. As Hector rights himself, he executes a remarkably opportunistic rising, diagonal cut--even as Achilles spins around exposing his back. In that moment, Hector is absolutely sure he has Achilles at the mercy of his sword. Suddenly Achilles' shield is there, *just where it needs to be just when it needs to be*. Hector's point glances harmlessly off it. Achilles has exposed his back to him, and Hector still cannot take advantage of the opportunity. But was it really an opportunity at all? One almost gets the feeling that Achilles is taking a moment to taunt him. But when one



Hector (Eric Bana, left) battles Patroclus (Garrett Hedlund, right) who is disguised as Achilles in the Warner Bros. film *TROY*. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.



looks more closely, no sense of the malicious really exists in what Achilles does. He is just doing what comes naturally. Ryan elaborated on this intricate maneuver:

That's what we called the 'turtle-shell spin.' If it were any fighter other than Achilles, that fighter would be dead. Hector is really good, but Achilles is just better. And we used all sorts of imagery, some not directly related to the fights--examples of modern day heroes or warriors, such as the inspirational Muhammad Ali, an Achilles image. Evander Holyfield, an extremely gifted fighter who punches above his weight, became an image for Hector.

The relative newcomer Eric Bana, playing Hector, has risen rather quickly on Hollywood's "A-list" of young, male actors. When asked about working with Bana, Ryan replied:



Ajax (Tyler Mane) calls out for someone to fight in the Warner Bros. film TROY. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.

nent, I think I honestly underestimated just how intricate and demanding that side of it would be. Once I was briefed by Simon Crane, Richard Ryan, and the team, I was hugely excited to take up the challenge. I found a fight trainer in Australia who spent a few weeks taking me through the basics of sword fighting. It gave me a head start when I joined Richard and the team. I was also training with weights at the gym, but the thing I was most interested in, besides the physical presence of Hector, was an emphasis on performance and fitness because I knew the demands of the shoot and the character were going to be such that I was going to best be served by



Ajax (Tyler Mane, left) wraps up Hector (Eric Bana, right) during a fight sequence from the Warner Bros. film TROY. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.

He was certainly renowned in Australia as a comedian--not so much as stand-up, more of a character comedian. The role that brought him to notoriety, *Chopper*, an Australian movie (his calling card to Hollywood), is a very funny, darkly funny. So he's got a strong background and a wonderful sense of character. In terms of his work with me on the fights, Eric's way into it was driven by the need to understand the intention of what he was doing, the heart of the story, what the character was *feeling* in each beat.

Eric Bana was later contacted in Australia and asked about his thoughts on fighting in the film and working with sword master Richard Ryan:

Whilst I knew there would be a large fighting compo-



Ajax (Tyler Mane) prepares to crush Hector (Eric Bana, below) in the Warner Bros. film TROY. Photograph courtesy of Gary Beach. Used under authorization.

being as fit as possible at the very beginning. The rehearsal for all fights was done throughout the duration of the shoot. This meant that we had plenty of time to prepare. The most difficult aspects were the heat, not knowing exactly when you were going to shoot a particular scene, and trying to maintain energy levels, physical condition, and motivation over such a long period.<sup>12</sup>

When asked about the various ways in which individual fighting styles emerged in the film, Bana said:

It was more a matter of trying to interpret for myself how the style of Hector would manifest itself within my own body. One thing, however, that Wolfgang Petersen said to me in pre-production was that he had always envisaged Hector to be like Evander Holyfield. And I found this reference extremely useful. Hector's style was always very direct, non-flashy, and purposeful. However, when opposite Achilles I found the physicality changed dramatically and required more lightness on one's feet.

Bana also commented on specific weapons styles he encountered shooting the film:

The spear and shield section was without doubt the most cumbersome but also the most impressive when I was first shown it by the stunt doubles. I particularly enjoyed the sword and shield section of the Achilles' fight but found the final sword and broken spear section the most dynamic and fun to do. In contrast, however, I very much enjoyed the more visceral, brutal style of fighting required for the Hector/Ajax fight.

Reflecting on the direct impact sword master Ryan and the stunt team had on the success of the fights, Bana praised them all:

There is no doubt that the input of every individual present had equal impact; this includes Simon, Wade, Richard, Buster,

and Mark. Simon and Wade were great at reminding us of the level of aggression required. Where I found Richard to be exceptional was in reminding me of every little moment, in terms of an action, and this enabled me to feel the character without feeling the weight of the technical side of the moves. Buster and Mark's strengths were always being able to solve any physical hiccups due to bad positioning, technique. Buster and Mark also took an active role in helping keep on top of things with regards to stretching and warming up.

The Achilles/Hector fight occurs at the climax of the film. Once Hector is killed, the major obstacle to the Greeks taking Troy has been eliminated. Somehow one innately knows, walls or no walls, Troy will fall. Somehow the audience intuitively that the heart that beat in Hector's chest was not his own but that of Troy. Achilles' wicked thrust has not only taken Hector's life, it has stabbed at the heart of each and every Trojan. With all of this importance sitting on a single fight, how did Bana contend with the pressure?

The Hector/Achilles fight was always referred to with much reverence, particularly by Wolfgang Petersen, Simon, and the stunt team. It's always dangerous, however, as a performer, to put more weight on one scene at the expense of another. I found it simpler to just concentrate on performing the fight to the best of my ability and allowing its own importance to sit in the context of the story. The toughest part was simply waiting for so long.

And how was Pitt as a partner?

I was very dependent on both Brad's athletic ability and comradeship. And in these respects he made the ideal fight partner. We both wanted the fight to be special and agreed that it was worth taking the necessary risks and time to make it work. The whole experience was an overwhelmingly positive one and I look back at all phases with fond

memories. It was the ultimate movie experience.

It became quite clear that Richard Ryan had embarked upon a profoundly deep commitment to find imagery, "keys" as he put it, for opening the door into the fight. But an additional key was the influence of fight director Bill Hobbs. Ryan offered some thoughts on one of Hobbs' most lasting contributions to the history of fight direction:

When you think back on a fight choreographed by Bill, it's not the techniques you remember. It's the characters and the choices they made within the fight. It's not what they did; it's how they did it. It's more than the sum of the fight moves.

This is obviously a lesson Ryan has taken deeply to heart as he continues his search for fresh and distinct ways of revealing character through the way in which the combatants engage each other in the film--of capturing "the apotheosis of marital grace," as Ryan was instructed in rendering Achilles' fight scenes--while simultaneously doing more than simply making the victor faster and stronger than everyone else.

The conversation then turned toward an exploration of what really constitutes a fight director. One of the contributions Bill Hobbs has made to the art and craft of staging fights is the principle that the fight director must tell a story through the fight. To do this, he or she can and should seek input from the actors and encourage that illusive phantom known as true collaboration. But the realities of working in a time and money-sensitive environment, such as the professional theatre or the film industry, often preclude such luxuries as lengthy rehearsal periods, the main ingredient necessary for said *true collaboration*. As Ryan acknowledged, fight directors rarely have the requisite time, talent and resources.

I've had it in theatre a few times, but ironically I got it in this film. Because of the nature and style of the fights, the rehearsal time was essential. My job was to keep track of character and story, to make choices, and be responsible to the Achilles character for his



moves and to Hector for his, so occasionally I'd say, 'No, we can't do that because that's too much like an Achilles move--let's do this instead.' This was a tricky responsibility because I'd have to keep track of the way each character fights, yet I hadn't even met the actors that were going to play those roles. I didn't know what their take on the character would be. All I had was what I had read from the script and my interpretation of it. When it was done, the work would be presented to Wolfgang and to the performers and then they would also have input into it and that became part of the collaborative process. So there was a collaborative process, but instead of it all happening as one unit, as in theatre, it was part here, a bit there, another bit there. However, one thing I think my theatre background made me bring to it was an understanding of character and scene structure. On one occasion I made the stunt men learn the characters' lines for the scene, something they apparently did not usually do

In fact, it is highly unusual for stunt men to learn the lines for a scene. The possibilities for catastrophe are myriad. What if the director should take issue with the direction the scene has taken? What if the director was to view it as a usurpation of responsibilities? How might "A-list" actors respond to a stunt man delivering their lines and even subconsciously influencing the direction in which the actor wants to take his or her character? Ryan explained that he believed it imperative, in this instance, to weave the lines into the choreography, even if it required the actors' listening to stunt men delivering their lines.<sup>13</sup>

The whole scene is about establishing character, and you've got to establish that through the text as well as the moves. So I said, 'We can't do this without you guys learning the lines.' There were a few furrowed brows, but, God bless them, they did it. Later Wolfgang came in and observed it. And he was, 'Ah, ya, so vat happens next in dis scene? We do dis. . . ?' And I said, 'Wolfgang, I'm sorry but I only get them to learn as far as the end of

the fight.' That's where a lot of theatre experience proved useful. Also, as a theatre practitioner, I was well versed in keeping the master shot, the through line of the story, the arc of the fight in mind. Always asking, 'Is this consistent with character?' Individual moves themselves might be cool, but if every character does those same signature moves, the only character revealed is the fight director's.

Ryan clearly sees himself as indebted to the stunt team he worked with. After hearing him discuss how much these often unrecognized stalwarts of the industry had brought to the process, it only seemed fitting to get to know them a little better. Ryan was more than willing to give credit where credit was due.

I'd be more than happy to work with these performers again.<sup>14</sup> Although they were not swordsmen in the same sense that most of us coming from a theatre stage combat background are, they did bring something to the fight that film requires and that many theatre fights lack—an enormous quality of intention and aggression. And it's something that was well suited to the weapons we were using, namely sword and shield.

Obviously, actors and stunt performers are gifted in far different ways. Whereas actors are paid to bring credible characters to life, stunt performers are paid to put life and limb on the line, executing incredible feats of physical skill. How many actors could actually manage the sort of "signature Achilles leap" former kickboxing champion turned stuntman Buster Reeves exhibited in *TROY*? Virtually none. Ryan was fortunate to have Brad Pitt, who was able to master both the physical and aesthetic demands of his fight scenes. According to Ryan, Pitt accomplished this by "building" his fights on the psychological context that informed them. But Pitt's combined athletic and thespian gift is unique.

The conversation then moved to the topic of how character is revealed through martial technique.

The fight is essentially done when you meet the actors. Obviously,

they can and probably want to contribute, as they have to actually play the fight. A good example from *TROY* is the Paris/Menelaus fight. In the initial version I'd over-choreographed it, which was fine. It's easier to edit out rather than be under pressure and have to make something up for the sake of having something and not have it as well thought through. When we started to work the fight with Brendan Gleeson (Menelaus) and Orlando Bloom (Paris), we realized we'd told what we needed to of the story by a particular part of the fight, and we didn't really need all the latter section. So I took moves from the latter part and used them to replace a couple of earlier bits. And the story was a bit stronger and clearer. But we shortened that fight, because that's what the actors needed to have happen to take ownership of the fight story. Our discussions weren't about moves as such, but about story.

In their fight, Menelaus divests Paris of the tools that define a warrior, i.e., his armor and weapons. Where did the initial concept for this come from? Ryan sees it as stemming from Menelaus' overriding desire to strip away anything that Paris might hide behind. If Menelaus kills enough Trojan soldiers, if he mocks Paris' manhood, if he deprives Paris of his armor, his weapons, and what little of his sense of honor remains, the boy will have run out of things to hide behind. Then the world (and Helen) will see Paris for what he truly is: a dishonorable, thieving, and cowardly boy. Ryan continued:

It's a motif with Paris. He has run off with Helen, he hides on the boat and behind the walls. He asks Hector early on, "Would you protect me against any enemy?" What Menelaus wants is to face him down. So I knocked off the helmet. I stripped the shield. It's now face to face. It's about the sword. For Menelaus, it's you and me, here, now. It's about reclamation of honor. And part of reclaiming that honor is to kill Paris in this duel. At the end, when Menelaus has won, he is

going to give Paris an honorable death. He raises his sword to kill him--and Paris runs and hides. Out of that springs Menelaus' line, "Is this what you left me for? This coward?" Menelaus is adhering to a code of honor he believes in.

Throughout the interview, Ryan had spoken of the important role images played in the development of the fights. But image, especially in Hollywood, also has a more personal and somewhat shallower significance. It is no secret that actors fiercely guard this commodity. Consequently, Ryan was impressed with Orlando Bloom's commitment to keep Paris honest, even when trembling in the dust at his brother's feet, back exposed to the raging Menelaus.

When we showed him the fight, he paused and muttered, 'Ummm.' And I thought, 'Here you've got an actor on the up and up--*Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Lord of the Rings*, and I've choreographed a fight where he gets the crap kicked out of him, he runs away, crawls, and clings to his brother's legs.' Up until that point it had been a clean slate. Everybody had liked their fights. I had done fourteen sword and shield fights and I was starting to feel like the well was close to empty. If I had to change this fight, I didn't know what I was going to do. Then Orlando stood up and said, 'Who choreographed this?' I took a deep breath, stepped forward, and said, 'Er--I did.' And then I steeled myself for his reply. Orlando said, 'This was for me, a really, really difficult scene because it's about the lowest point that my character has in the story. And I wasn't sure where to go with it yet. But having seen what you've done, I now know. Thank you very much.' Then he reached out to shake my hand. I imagine what he had been doing was going through it, thinking through what I'd done and then meshing that with what he had already done. So he took up where I knocked him to the ground, where Menelaus raises the sword, where he runs away, and he added, 'I run

away to Hector's legs and cling on.' So he was sort of morphing the two images together. For a few moments there I was sweating, but he completely went for it, played Paris being outmatched and getting the crap knocked out of him. You have to applaud that.

I asked Ryan if he was aware that he might be making some action choices for Bloom. This seemed a gutsy choice to make--facing down the possibility that one of the stars of the film might not want to exhibit such abject cowardice--even in character. One has to imagine that some stars might have taken that opportunity to turn on the fight director. Ryan replied:

Possibly. But I don't know any other way to work. I mean my experience has been from day one, from that class with Bill Hobbs, that it arises out of a narrative. What's the story we're telling? What are we trying to do? And that's what I try to choreograph. When you're working in the theatre, you do that in conjunction with the actors as the fights are being developed. In film, you present them with a fight, but you still have a responsibility to the story and the characters--perhaps even more so.

The discussion then took a decidedly psychological direction concerning how a character's emotional life can influence how the fight is explored, can even determine when, where, and under what conditions the character will face his or her opponent. For example, it is easy to empathize with Hector. His homeland, his wife, his son are being attacked by a foreign force. He has been pulled into this vortex; he has no choice. His brother's inability to control his libido and act in a manner befitting his station has dragged him into this fight. He is a highly competent, yet reluctant warrior. Achilles, on the other hand, is fighting to ensure his name will not slip into obscurity with the passing of the eons. His lust for reputation is what drives him to join the expedition to Troy. After the initial landing on the beach adjacent to Troy, in which he leads a successful raid on Apollo's temple, Achilles is so alienated by Agamemnon's need to take credit (and the spoils of war, including the

beautiful niece of King Priam, Briseis) that he cannot bring himself to fight for the bloated king any longer. It takes Hector's killing of Patroclus to stoke his emotional fires once more. Ryan explained how the glory-mongering Achilles was driven to take on Hector on Hector's ground:

In an earlier scene, Achilles says to Hector, 'Why kill you now, when no one can see it?'<sup>15</sup> When Achilles actually does kill Hector, no Greeks are there to witness his triumph. He rides alone in his chariot up to the walls of Troy. Only Trojans gathered on the city walls will witness this confrontation. It's not the big arena fight with all the Greeks around. It's a more personal fight. It's not just about glory--it's about Patroclus. It is Achilles' anger, his sense of revenge that motivates him to be there.

Equally critical in fight scenes is the selection of weapons. The battle scenes and one-on-one fight sequences in *TROY* offer a number of weapons and styles of fighting: bow and arrow, single sword, spear, sword and shield, war hammer. The landing on the beach even gives the viewer a chance to see the Roman "testudo" or tortoise maneuver<sup>16</sup> -not to mention a giant, hollow wooden horse that houses a crack team of Greek commandos. In a film that sports dozens of actors involved in fight sequences, how did each character come to be paired with his individual weapons? For example, how is it that Achilles' friend and brother in battle, Ajax, wields a huge war hammer? Ryan offered some insight into working with and arming the sizeable actor cast in the role of Ajax:

I knew who Tyler [Mane] was because of having seen *X-Men*.<sup>17</sup> He is a 6'6" ex-professional wrestler. Fortunately, I did have a rather tall stunt man to work with--the things that worked in my imagination needed to be road tested on someone larger than myself. Then armorer Simon Atherton brought in the weapon that had been designed for Ajax. I began to explore its properties because Simon Atherton wanted feedback on it along with all the other characters' weapons. Ajax's

weapon has a spike, an axe blade, and a war hammer. So it's got numerous points of impact. It's a staff weapon as well. It can be used in a number of different but very specific ways, all of which are strength-oriented techniques rather than moves requiring finesse. All it needed was to have the point of balance changed because it was too heavy on one end. So Simon took it away and changed the length of the staff, and it became a slightly more compact weapon, but with a better heft. If this is Ajax's weapon, then it is reflective of his character. The way it moves and the type of attacks it makes are going to reflect back on who he is. By extrapolating backwards from the weapon's properties I could create a style of fighting for Ajax. Obviously, the script helped as well, in that it put Ajax in the thick of the action, fighting numerous Trojans at once. Tyler was great. As an ex-professional wrestler, he has a good physical vocabulary. He basically just learned the fight and performed it wholeheartedly. The move where Ajax forces Hector's blade over his head and into Hector's back arose out of Hector's scrambling about and Ajax's not being able to get to him. So when Ajax got close, he enfolded Hector. Because of the height difference between the actors, the move just presented itself. It also helped serve in defining Hector's style. Ajax is this big, important, strong warrior who in an earlier scene knocks down horses and their riders. And he has a robust impact weapon. So what are you going to do? You can't make him weak when he fights Hector and have Hector chop through the staff of the weapon with his sword. After Ajax blocks Hector's attack, he uses a tactic we've seen before--he ensnares Hector and tries to break his back. But on this occasion, Hector improvises, releases his sword, and head butts Ajax, who proceeds to drop him. Hector then scrambles away and looks for an opportunity. He

finds a sword and deflects Ajax' attack. Hector is knocked to the ground yet again, and he uses another improvisatory tactic as he finds a spear that he thrusts into Ajax. And then comes one of my favorite bits in the fight: Ajax breaks off the shaft of the spear and beats Hector with the broken end, hitting him with such venom that there's actually a moment when we believe he will defeat Hector by beating him to death.

Death scenes are very important moments. Ryan obviously had certain images in mind he carried into the rehearsal process. But did he have any specific ideas about the deaths of each of the major characters?

I didn't come in with those in mind. They evolved out of the rehearsals. I don't like coming in with a finished product. I choreographed Achilles and Hector, but Brad and Eric had to play it. It's not just choreography. I mean, while I'm very grateful for the fact that the fight has been mentioned by the critics, they only mention it because both of those guys played it well. So, as far as coming in with specific death scenes in mind--no, I didn't. I wanted to be open to how and where the choreography led. Using the broken spear in the Achilles/Hector fight? That was a second choice. My first choice was okay, but it was an idea that that no longer struck me as right. So we threw it out and went back to the script and the characters. Hector has improvised and picked up weapons before. What if he does that again? And what if it appears like it'll work? However, this time Achilles strips it from him. And what if Achilles uses it against him before he has an opportunity to respond? That would present Hector as being consistent in his actions and Achilles as using his own superior speed and martial ability to overcome Hector's strongest asset.

It was inevitable that the conversation would eventually come around to histori-

cal accuracy. How does a fight director blend history, myth, fantasy, and martial prowess? Ryan made it quite clear that although historical accuracy has its place, dramatic impact and storytelling remain the most important concerns.

Certainly, I'm looking to be historically accurate, as far as I can be. But I'm not looking to be exclusively that because ultimately my responsibility is as a storyteller, not a historian. Besides, sometimes it's not appropriate because it will limit your creativity. For example, I was about three weeks into choreography and somebody emailed me and asked, 'Are you being historically accurate in the fighting styles?' And I wrote back, 'Achilles' fighting style will be completely in tandem with that of a man whose father, Zeus, came to his mother, Thetis, a sea-nymph, in the shape of a swan. His fighting style will be completely consistent with those facts!' Ultimately, a movie is storytelling; it's film and not a historical document. The main responsibility is to the narrative. Now that doesn't mean you shouldn't be historically accurate where possible, but that's not at all the main focus.

What was the biggest adjustment Ryan had to make in moving from theatre to film, and not just any film, but a genuine, dyed-in-the-wool, Hollywood-funded project? In what ways was Ryan compelled to adapt?

Pace--pace and the level of performance--and commitment to the action that is needed. In theater, when you are choreographing a fight, you have to ensure that all of the elements that tell the story are in place and that the fight is paced and focused in such a way that the audience can follow or read the story. However, with filmmaking, the director and editor can focus those elements by making sure that the only thing the audience sees at a particular moment is what they want them to see. And that remains the same every time you watch the film.

On the stage, the play has to be created and edited in every performance *as it's performed*. Missing beats in the choreography-making mistakes-means the story is hard to follow or, indeed, is lost. On film, it's less important dramatically because the elements of the story that need to be shown can be pieced together from a number of takes. However, the level of commitment in fighting, in the playing of it, needs to be much greater, which leads to the fight being more intense with a faster pace. If the antagonists are not really pushing to get at each other, it can look like they are not really trying. In theatre it is often said performance pace is 80%. In film, nothing less than 100% is acceptable.

Fight directors are ultimately teachers. They fight, they direct, they teach. But most are aware that it is also incumbent upon them to continue to learn. So what did the sword master Richard Ryan learn from his experience on *TROY*? Although cinema generally takes much from the theatre, is it possible to learn from film and reverse this process? According to Ryan this is, indeed, possible.

Yes. In a sense it reaffirmed for me the primacy of story, of what you play. Also, it's very easy in theatre to over-choreograph, to complicate when you don't need to. For me working on *TROY* was a reminder that it's all about acting. I choreographed what I thought were logical sequences or moves that told stories. I was proud of the fights, but it was the actors that performed them and played the intentions of the various moves. When it works, it's a wonderful synergy. Hopefully what I choreographed made it easy for them to play those intentions and, in doing so, tell the story. In the final analysis, a fight needs what the performer brings to it to make it live. Thankfully, those guys brought it in spades.

And what about the notorious Hollywood pecking order?

It wasn't really a problem. The size of the project meant the chain of command was longer. In working on a stage show there would be you as the fight director/choreographer, the performers, and the director. And that's pretty much it. The other points of communication would be the designer, costume designer, technical director, and the company stage manager. But on a project this size, there were many more departments. I worked within the auspices of the stunt department so, although I was answerable to Wolfgang and the producers, it was Simon Crane and Wade Eastwood who were my heads of the department and who I worked with on a daily basis. Because of their background and experience in big-budget action films, I was happy with this structure. They understood how to film action, and I was getting a wonderful education from the best in the game.

*TROY* has had its run. The reviews on the film ran hot and cold. But most of the critics were unanimous in their praise of Ryan's work. The May 16, 2004, issue of *The New York Times Sunday Culture Magazine* offered the following review by Eric Porter:

Undoubtedly, the deeds of *Troy's* characters are what reverberates most powerfully through the film itself, for what we are left with, once the trappings of mythology are gone, is an action movie, plain and simple, and in the actual combat scenes, Petersen emphatically delivers the goods. The one-on-one fights-of which the most momentous is the showdown between the Greek Achilles (Brad Pitt) and Troy's top warrior, Hector (Eric Bana)-are terrifically choreographed. Characterized by dancing footwork and close maneuvering, they are not typical swordfights so much as wrestling bouts made more dangerous by the combatants happening to be armed.

In the May 21, 2004, edition of the independent digital on-line magazine *Entertainment*, Anthony Quinn chimed in with his thoughts:

The wonderfully choreographed duel between Hector and Achilles has the accelerating tension of a championship bout as both fighters thrust and feint, spears and then blades ringing against shields like a clapper inside a church bell; one senses the sheer exhaustion of fighting under armour, and the palpable fear that a single false move could be your last.

National Public Radio's May 14, 2004, edition of *Fresh Air* broadcast a review by David Edelstein, film critic for the on-line magazine Slate. Edelstein afforded sword master Richard Ryan additional praise:

The fights, especially the ones that are mono y mono, are thrilling to watch. . . . When he (Achilles) fights, he has an amazing killing move. He leaps, and he thrusts his sword from on high, in a lightening scorpion-strike.

And, finally, from the May 25, 2004, edition of London's *Evening Standard*, columnist Allison Person offered Ryan high praise indeed:

There is one amazing fight sequence at the beginning where Achilles jumps off the ground, pirouettes and, with a matador-like flourish, plunges his sword between the shoulder blades of an 8 ft brute. 'Achilles was born to take the lives of men,' whispers somebody, and Pitt makes you believe it.

As the Greek ships returning from their victory at Troy discovered, the waters of the Aegean can be deadly. The waters of a Hollywood film can be equally treacherous in the best of circumstances, especially for someone new to navigating them. But the critical praise lavished on this film's fights suggests that Fight Master Richard Ryan will soon be bid a "bon voyage" as he boards ship for yet another cinematic voyage.







Photograph Courtesy of Bill Tiernan/The Virginian-Pilot

## Footnotes:

1. Wolfgang Petersen burst onto the international scene with his claustrophobically intense World War II submarine film *Das Boot*, starring critically acclaimed German actor Jurgen Prochnow. Petersen quickly followed up with a string of US financed films--some of which received not only critical acclaim, but solid box-office response as well.
2. An early mentor of Ryan's, and the much-lauded fight arranger of such major motion pictures as Richard Lester's Musketeer trilogy: *The Three Musketeers* (1974), *The Four Musketeers* (1975), and *The Return of the Musketeers* (1989); Lester's *Robin and Marian* (1976), Ridley Scott's *The Duelists* (1977), Stephen Frears' *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988), and more recently, Kevin Reynolds' *The Count of Monte Cristo* (2002).
3. Ryan began his actor training at Mountview Theatre School but abandoned the course of studies early to begin his career as a professional actor. It was at Mountview that Ryan was first introduced to stage combat as taught by Bill Hobbs. After leaving Mountview, Ryan wanted to complete his acting studies, so he sought training at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, where he received additional lessons in stage combat, but-he is careful to note-not at the level Bill Hobbs had afforded.
4. *Greek Mythology: From the Iliad to the Fall of the Last Tyrant*. (<http://messagenet.com/myths>)
5. This is Achilles' first fight in the film. It is an amazing one-blow display of Achilles' martial prowess that leaves the dumbfounded Boagrias shocked and dead, even before he collapses to his knees, only to topple face down in the dust. The two armies amasses on the field to do battle stand in awe as Achilles bellows, "Is there no one else? Is there no one else?"
6. Ryan demonstrates the motion Achilles uses at various times throughout the film. When one sees it out of context, one immediately thinks, "Of course...that's a speed skater." But when performed by Brad Pitt as Achilles in the heat of battle, it appears an inspired martial technique that utterly confuses his opponents.
7. This leaping attempt to thrust over the opponent's shield, in fact, became that illusive "signature move" Ryan was seeking for Achilles.
8. In Homer's text, the *deus ex machina* feature is a magically appearing "other spear."
9. Ryan modeled what became one of Achilles' signature wards-the shield on the left arm lifted up and resting on the upper back, behind the head, protecting the back of the head, neck, and shoulders.
10. The spear imbeds itself in a tree trunk a few inches ahead of the striding Odysseus, who stops short, eyes the vibrating shaft of the spear, and casts a knowing glance at Achilles. If Achilles had really intended to kill him, he would now be pinned to the tree like a butterfly on a display board. It is clear the two men are actually fast friends.
11. After the Greeks make their initial landing on the beach adjacent to Troy, Achilles leads a platoon of soldiers off of the beach and into Apollo's temple. To take the temple, Achilles single-handedly dispatches several Trojan soldiers.
12. Correspondence from Eric Bana to Michael Kirkland, dated July 22, 2004.
13. Ryan was referring to the Achilles/Patroclus fight, a sparring match in which the older and experienced Achilles is training his younger cousin, who is impatient to experience the excitement of battle in his first-and ultimately his last--war.
14. A reference to stunt men Buster Reeves, Mark Mottram, David Leitch and Mark Southworth.
15. Ryan is referring to the scene immediately following Achilles' storming of Apollo's temple. Hector is cornered and out numbered by Achilles' men. Achilles could easily kill him, but there would be no glory in it. Hector's death must be very public and directly at the hands of Achilles.
16. This was a tactical maneuver often used by companies in the Roman legions to fend off missile attacks, such as arrows, javelins, spears, catapulted rocks, and so forth. This maneuver was particularly effective in siege situations where the primary source of attack is from above.
17. Mane portrayed Victor Creed ("Sabretooth") in Brian Singer's film adaptation of the popular comic book series of the same name.



# The 2004 National Stage Combat Workshop

by Michael Chin

In 2004, the Society of American Fight Directors celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the National Stage Combat Workshops in style. This past year the SAFD sponsored three national workshops at two venues: the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and North Carolina School of the Arts (NCSA).

The traditional Actor/Combatant and Intermediate Actor/Combatant workshops were once again held in the Southwest on the beautiful campus of UNLV. For sixteen consecutive years UNLV has graciously opened its doors to the SAFD. The SAFD thanks them for their hospitality and most generous and continued support.

The much anticipated tri-annual Teacher Training Workshop (TTW) was sponsored and hosted in the Southeast by NCSA in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Twenty-one advanced level actor/combatants took part in the three-week program. The future certified teachers received instruction from the TTW Coordinator Dale Girard, as well as Fight Masters J. Allen Suddeth and Richard Raether. The SAFD thanks the NCSA for its involvement with the SAFD and looks forward to future endeavors.

For the second year in a row and for the third time in SAFD history, an Intermediate Actor/Combatant Workshop (IACW) was offered. Thirteen students were afforded the opportunity to renew and add on to their actor/combatant status. As a prelude to things to come, IACW students performed their renewal tests in rapier and dagger, broadsword, knife, quarterstaff, and unarmed on the first Saturday of the workshop in front of a very supportive and eager actor/combatant audience. During the second week of the workshop, they received master-class training from Fight Director/Certified Teacher staff members John Bellomo, Jamie Cheatham, Michael Chin, Bob Macdougall, Michael Mahaffey, Don Preston, and Paul Steger, as well as IACW Coordinator Brian Byrnes and Fight Masters Chuck Coyl, Erik Fredricksen, and David Woolley. They were later given the chance to perform Skills Proficiency Tests (SPTs) in additional weapons (sword and shield, single sword, and smallsword). The IACW was created as a bridge between the basic Actor/Combatant Workshop and the Advanced Workshop.

The Actor/Combatant Workshop was also well represented, with forty-two students from around the country and one student from Hong Kong attending. ACW students spent three weeks perfecting their fight skills in rapier and dagger, unarmed, and broadsword techniques. Students were also given master-class instruction in martial arts, knife fighting, acting the fight, and sword and buckler techniques by the Fight Masters, Fight

Director/Certified Teacher Instructors. Film fighting was also taught by Maestro David Boushey. In addition, the new fight master, Richard Ryan, dropped by and helped out with the adjudication duties.

The closing night ceremonies and extravaganza took on a new look as the master of ceremonies duties were turned over to John Bellomo and Mike Mahaffey. The duo brought down the house as their alter egos, Dash Valiant and Gioni Vespa, performed Guido Woolley's franchised Renaissance show *Bold and Stupid Men* to a very appreciative house. Their swashbuckling antics and razor sharp wit together with Paul Steger's encore performance of *Balloon Mime Act* kept the audience wanting more.

During the evening's festivities special silver platters marking the 25th Anniversary of the NSCW were awarded to the founders David Boushey and Erik Fredricksen. Other awards of recognition went to Head Intern, Lacy Altwine, who won the Paddy Crean Award; John Coleman, who, instrumental at the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) in getting attention for Fight Choreographers, won the President's Award; Ryan Bechard, who won the Founder's Award given by David Boushey in recognition of excellence in unarmed fighting; and Intern Heidi Wolf, who won the James Finney Memorial Award for perseverance in the face of adversity.

The highlight of the evening was the Broadway Cares/Equity Fights Aids (BC/EFA) drawing. The SAFD raised close to \$900 for BC/EFA. The SAFD would like to thank all those who bought raffle tickets and especially those who donated prizes: Neil Massey, a beautiful dagger; Mark Allen, a whip; Dale Girard, his book; Richard Ryan, a stunt/crew t-shirt from the movie *TROY*. In addition, our appreciation goes out to the coordinators of the New York Summer Sling, the London Lion in Winter, the Philadelphia Cheesesteak, the Las Vegas Winter Stage Combat Workshop, the Denver Rumbles in The Rockies, the Louisiana Crawfish Boil, the Virginia Beach Bash, and the Chicago Winter Wonderland Workshops for donating free tuition as raffle prizes for this most worthy cause.

The 25th Annual NSCW was a lot of fun and held promise for a very bright future as seventy-six students participated in the three workshops. Next year, the SAFD is planning on keeping the three-workshop/two-places format. An Advanced Actor Combatant Workshop with the basic Actor/Combatant workshop is scheduled for its seventeenth year at UNLV. And the SAFD is looking forward to returning to the Southeast with the summer session's Introduction to Stage Combat Workshop in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

## AWARDS

Best Male/ACW: Brian Plocharczyk

Best Female/ACW: Kelly Mizell

Best Scene/ACW: Fool For Love (Brian Plocharczyk & Kelly Mizell)

Best Male/IACW: Colby Baker

Best Female/IACW: Maggie Macdonald

Best Scene/IACW: Zastrozzi (Monalisa Arias & Rachel Stubbs)

Founder's Award: Ryan Bechard

James Finney Memorial Award: Heidi Wolf

President's Award: John Coleman/AGMA

Paddy Crean Award: Lacy Altwine



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# The 2004 Celebration Barn Workshop

by J. Allen Suddeth

The National Fight Directors Training Program met again in 2004 for the thirteenth year at the Celebration Barn Theatre in South Paris, Maine. Students from all over the country came together for two weeks at the end of June to study the fine points of becoming professional fight directors with Fight Masters J. Allen Suddeth and Richard Raether. Leading the Actors Ensemble (for the fifth year) was Certified Teacher Mark Olsen from the Pennsylvania State University. This year's intern was Chris Ockler from New York City.

Film artist A. C. Weary, who also brought his son Jake, edited the video films during his visit. This year, for the first time, almost everything was cross-shot with music and special effects added. Sadly, it cost Weary a camera because the first shot saw one of the digital cams run over by a speeding van full of bad guys in the road. Even the tape could not be retrieved.

During the two weeks, students performed Olsen's famous mask exercises, battle-day drills, duels, Shakespeare scenes, and contemporary violence in a series of scenes and classes. It is amazing to watch the company take so many challenges on board and at the fast pace that was set. It is also wonderful to see everyone, no matter their experience level, increasingly feel able to make character choices quickly and direct fights.

A video crew from WGME, Portland, the local CBS affiliate, who shot a long sequence aired near the end of the workshop, also graced the workshop. This affected the public's awareness of the show, resulting in the largest audience attendance in years.

This year, three of the students passed renewal in weapons based on their work at the Barn Workshops, a feat made possible by a resolution generously put into effect last year by the SAFD governing body. Those students were Fulton Burns, Jessica Morgan, and Rachel Stubbs.

A director on board for the third year in a row, J. R. Spaulding from Michigan, interfaced with the fight directors and staff on a daily basis and really made a difference in the final product. He

also single handedly directed the final show and even saved it when the Barn light board finally gave up the ghost in the technical rehearsal. The ever prepared Spaulding had a ready replacement in his luggage.

Participating in this year's Barn Workshops were:

## Director

J.R. Spaulding Jr.

## Fight Directors

Cara Rawlings

Dan Zisson

Benaiah Anderson

Seth Mazzaglia

## Actors Ensemble

Jessica Morgan

Brian Quint

Rachael Stubbs

Troy Degerstrom

Fulton Burns

Andy Liegl

Noah Brody

Charlie Cascino

Over \$1,700 was raised at the Celebration Barn Workshop. The Barn Workshop is proud to have been responsible for providing nearly \$10,000 to the Society of American Fight Directors in the past five years.

In 2005, something special is planned: the expansion of the workshop to three weeks so more time can be spent with video filmmaking and acting and staging fights for the camera. Students will be offered their own DVD copy of their work to take advantage of the digital media. Stay tuned for more details on the web and in this magazine.



Bottom row left to right: Charlie Cascino, Cara Rawlings, Rachel Stubbs, Andy Liegl, Brian Quint, J. Allen Suddeth

Top row left to right: Jessica Morgan, Richard Raether, Seth Mazzaglia, Benaiah Anderson, Noah Brody, Fulton Burns, J. R. Spaulding, Dan Zisson, Troy Degerstrom, Chris Ockler, Mark Olsen.

Not pictured: A. C. Weary, Jake Weary, Ben Olsen, Carol Brett

# Master's Workshop at Lake Tahoe

by Drew Sutherland

The Master's Workshop at South Lake Tahoe Community College offered through Dueling Arts International and billed as "A Unique Weekend of Master Classes Taught by Three of America's Foremost Masters" proved to be just that. The days were long enough without providing any sense of a boot-camp mentality. Everyone was there to train hard and, most important, learn something. One thing conspicuously absent from the weekend was combat technique for technique's sake. The weekend revolved around effective technique as it related to the acting process. It was nice to be reminded that theatrical combat is indeed part of acting.

The first day dawned clear and beautiful in the alpine setting of Lake Tahoe. The participants all met at South Lake Tahoe Community College's Fine Arts Building and began a light but thorough warm-up led by Dueling Arts founder and president, Gregory Hoffman. After the warm-up, the participants launched into some exacting and challenging refresher smallsword work. If you have never had a chance to study with Hoffman, you are urged to take advantage of all he has to offer this industry. Early in the class Hoffman spoke about finding some intention in the fight sequence he assigned the participants and encouraged them to develop a sense of character as well as an acting objective to

pursue during the class. This made this challenging sequence all the more interesting and complete.

After a short break, the participants were led into some Japanese sword work with Erik Fredricksen. Taking a class under Fredricksen was an amazing experience. His practical knowledge of swordplay coupled with years of experience in theatrical combat, *Aikido*, and acting make him a uniquely qualified teacher. Fredricksen emphasized focusing energy and sending it through the blade because one's blade tends to decelerate on the approach to the target. He also alerted participants to the importance of internal relaxation while one is executing a staged fight.

After lunch, the group reconvened for some *Suzuki* work and swordplay with J. R. Beardsley. Although I had studied *Suzuki* before, it was not until this day that I realized how effective a training tool it can be for theatrical combat. The class culminated in a *Kata* performed to music entitled "The Samurai Swashbuckler."

After the *Suzuki* sojourn, the participants began the quiet and gentle part of the day with Maestro Boushey. The thing that has not changed about the Maestro is his expertise in his field. If one only knew half of what he has forgotten about unarmed fighting one would be well versed.




The day ended with a barbecue on the lakeshore, where we watched the sunset and engaged in animated conversation.

The morning of the second day consisted of fast and furious rapier and dagger with Fredricksen as he returned to European roots and Talhoffer Broadsword with J. R. Beardsley with all its pummel strikes and kicks to the groin.

The afternoon session provided an extended study of unarmed fighting for the camera taught by Boushey. This second day ended around 4:30 with everyone either driving off or in search of Mexican food and the perfect Margarita.

This workshop was one of the best this author has attended largely due to Dueling Arts International, Karl Ramsey, and the hospitality of South Lake Tahoe Community College. All the students in the classes were provided with personal attention from these amazing teachers and were able to study and focus upon the work in a most relaxed atmosphere. Look for the workshop to occur again by checking under workshops for Dueling Arts International. [www.Duelingarts.com](http://www.Duelingarts.com)

◆◆◆



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August 22 - September 10, 2005

United Stuntmen's Association, Everett, WA

(425) 290-9957 [www.stuntschool.com](http://www.stuntschool.com)

## Summer Session in Stage Combat

June 20 - July 8, 2005

SAFD & North Carolina School of the Arts, Winston-Salem, NC

(336) 734-2834 [www.safd.org/NSCW/NCSA/NSCW\\_NCSA.html](http://www.safd.org/NSCW/NCSA/NSCW_NCSA.html)

## National Stage Combat Workshop Advanced Actor Combatant Workshop

July 11 - 29, 2005

SAFD & University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV

(702) 895-3662 [www.safd.org](http://www.safd.org)

## BNSCW 2005 - British National Stage Combat Workshop

July 25 - August 5, 2005

Islington Arts and Media Centre, Turle Road, LONDON N4 3LS

0144 7981 806 265 or E-mail: [Secretary@bassc.org](mailto:Secretary@bassc.org)

[www.bassc.org](http://www.bassc.org)

## National Fight Directors Workshop Actor Ensemble Workshop Action Film Workshop

July 31 - August 20, 2005

SAFD & North Carolina School of the Arts, Winston-Salem, NC

[www.safd.org](http://www.safd.org)

For more information, e-mail: [NYFGTDIRECTOR@aol.com](mailto:NYFGTDIRECTOR@aol.com)

## Summer Sling IX

August 18 - 21, 2005

Fights4, New York, NY

(718) 788-4957 [www.safd.org](http://www.safd.org)

## Philadelphia Stage Combat Workshop

October 2005

SAFD & The University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA

(215) 888-4172 [www.philascw.org](http://www.philascw.org)

## The Eleventh Annual Winter Wonderland Workshop

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(708) 466-7055 [www.winterwonderlandworkshop.com](http://www.winterwonderlandworkshop.com)

# PUT TO THE TEST

## Results of the SAFD's Skills Proficiency Tests

Date	Location
Instructor	Adjudicator
Person Tested	Weapons Proficiency
RD Rapier & Dagger	UA Unarmed
QS Quarterstaff	SS Smallsword
BS Broadsword	S&S Sword & Shield
KN Knife	SiS Single Sword
Renewal	Renewal of Actor/Combatant Status
EAE	Examiner's Award for Excellence

### May 2004

<b>May 29</b>	<b>College Conservatory of Music at U of C</b>
<b>k. Jenny Jones</b>	<b>Richard Raether</b>
Sonia Koschoreck	R&D UA QS
Julianna Bloodgood	UA QS
Michael Littig	R&D UA QS
Havilah Brewster	R&D UA QS
Allison Sell	R&D UA QS
Ashley Logan	R&D UA QS
Eric Kilpatrick	R&D UA QS
Laurie Gardner	R&D UA QS
Christopher O'Connor	R&D UA QS
Craig Verm	R&D UA QS
Mary Jane Schwartz	UA QS
Sam Lewis	R&D UA QS
Andrew Garland	R&D UA QS
Jonathan Kay	UA QS

### June 2004

<b>June 29</b>	<b>Milwaukee, WI</b>
<b>James "Jamie" Cheatham</b>	<b>David Woolley</b>
Richard Hedderman	SS UA BS QS S&S

### September 2004

<b>September 6</b>	<b>Texas Intensive Regional Wksp</b>
<b>k. Jenny Jones/Mark Guinn</b>	<b>Brian Byrnes</b>
Alan Hutton	BS
Stewart Hawley	R&D BS
Ann Harlan	R&D

### October 2004

<b>October 24</b>	<b>Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire</b>
<b>Gregory Ramsey</b>	<b>J. Allen Suddeth</b>
Lindsey Day	R&D UA
Kim Slagle	R&D UA
Daniel Kostelec	R&D SiS UA
Mike Crellin	R&D SiS UA
Ana Reisman	R&D SiS UA
Catherine Simmons	R&D SiS UA
Eileen Earnest	R&D SiS UA
Kara Haas	R&D SiS UA
Daniel Higbee	R&D UA
Christopher Salazar	R&D SiS UA
Tim Shelton	R&D SiS UA (EAE-All)
Alex Hill	R&D SiS UA (EAE-All)
Stephanie Herrera	R&D SiS UA
Jessica Eppler	R&D SiS UA
Kelly Vrooman	R&D SiS UA
Ryan Bono	R&D SiS UA
Andrew Dell	R&D UA
Kristen Herbert	S&S
David Catanese	S&S
Mark Schwentker	S&S (EAE)
David Mason	S&S (EAE)

<b>October 30</b>	<b>Southern Illinois University</b>
Richard Raether	Chuck Coyl
Keith Gatchel	UA
Theo Sakellarides	UA
Basha Evans	UA

Jared Nell	UA
Jason Rost	UA
Calliope Tsoukalas	UA
Christopher Jorandby	UA
Paul Kennedy	UA
Jeremy Woods	UA
Cara Harper	UA

### November 2004

<b>November 11</b>	<b>Southern Methodist University</b>
<b>William Lengfelder</b>	<b>Drew Fracher</b>
Michael Yeshion	SiS
Adam Elliott	R&D SiS UA
Sean Anthony	R&D SiS
Weston Davis	SiS
Christina Hall	SiS
Katie Cook	R&D SiS UA
Katie Costello	R&D SiS UA
Christopher Domig	R&D
Timothy Pyles	R&D
Kaytie Morris	SiS
Daniel Gordon	UA
David Matherly	UA
Catherine Dubord	UA
Mallory Harwood	UA
Robert Van Guelpen	UA
Jennifer Nix	UA
Hayli Henderson	UA

Laura Pyle	SiS
James Keegan	SiS
Miriam Donald	SiS
Jessica Dunton	SiS
Colleen Sullivan	SiS
Eric Schoen	SiS (EAE)

### November 19 Blackfriar's Playhouse

<b>John Scheidler</b>	<b>Joseph Martinez</b>
Jessica Dunton	R&D
James Keegan	R&D
James Beard	R&D
Eric Schoen	R&D (EAE)
David Loar	R&D
Miriam Donald	R&D
Laura Pyle	R&D
Colleen Sullivan	R&D

### November 23 Fights4/New York University

<b>J. David Brimmer/Robert "Tink" Tuftee</b>	<b>Chuck Coyl</b>
Michael Yahn	SS
Justin Lauro	SiS UA KN (EAE)
Patrick Taylor	SiS UA KN
Matthew Wilson	SiS SS KN (EAE)
Ryan Bartruff	SiS BS KN (EAE)
Lauren Welteroth	BS
Michael Mraz	UA BS
Pearce Larson	SiS BS
Corey Robert Brandeis Pierno	BS KN (EAE)
Alexandra Henrickson	BS
Craig Jorczak	BS

### November 23 New York University

<b>J. David Brimmer</b>	<b>Chuck Coyl</b>
Prentice Onayemi	UA
Sarah Sylvester	UA
Benjamin Forster	UA
Mason Rosenthal	UA
Sonya Cooke	UA
Eero Laine	UA
Michael Rudez	BS
Gregory Powell	BS
Kathleen Johnson	BS
Elizabeth Gutman	BS
Adam Souza	BS
Jak Peters	BS
John Columbus	BS
Neimah Djourabchi	BS

### November 28 Alabama Shakespeare Festival

<b>Leraldo Anzaldúa</b>	<b>Brian Byrnes</b>
Lauren Bloom	R&D UA BS
Anthony Stockard	UA BS
Craig Pattison	R&D UA BS
Meghan Lisi	R&D UA BS
Christopher Boyd	R&D UA BS
Alketa-Eboni Witcher	R&D UA BS
Tim Gittings	R&D UA BS
Douglas Rossi	UA BS

### December 2004

#### December 4 Virginia Commonwealth University

<b>Adam Mclean</b>	<b>Dale Girard</b>
Timothy Bambara	R&D
Jonathan Becker	R&D
Jeffrey Cole	R&D
Amanda Durst	R&D
Stephanie Hanna	R&D
Lisa Jackson	R&D
Jennifer Robison	R&D
Jeffrey Roop	R&D
Brian Vrtis	R&D



CT/FD Geoff Kent (left) teaches the safety issues of the right cross in a class at the University of Denver. Photo by Matt Suby.

<b>November 13</b>	<b>The Actors Gymnasium</b>
<b>Angela Bonacasa</b>	<b>Chuck Coyl</b>
Amy Harmon	SS
Brenda Kelly	SS
David Kelch	SS
Rachel Stubbs	SS
Jessica Dunne	SS
Chris Julun	SS

<b>November 17</b>	<b>University of San Diego</b>
<b>Colleen Kelly</b>	<b>Brian Byrnes</b>
Neil Shah	R&D UA BS
Rod Brogan	R&D UA BS

<b>November 19</b>	<b>Shenandoah Shakespeare</b>
<b>John Scheidler</b>	<b>Joseph Martinez</b>
David Loar	SiS
James Beard	SiS



David White	R&D	Michael Bernardi	SiS UA QS	<b>December 18</b>	<b>Univ. of Wisconsin-Stevens Point</b>
<b>December 7</b>	<b>Marymount-Fordham</b>	Kristin Villanueva	R&D SiS UA QS	<b>Robert Ek</b>	<b>Richard Raether</b>
<b>Richard Ryan</b>	<b>Brian Byrnes</b>	Cliff Connor	SiS UA QS	Dana Craig	R&D UA
Angela Bianco	SS	Thaddeus Harvey	SiS QS	Jolene Dalebroux	R&D UA
Chris Bremner	SS	Yasha Jackson	SiS UA	Derrick Gaetke	R&D UA
Angelo Carotenuto	SS	Allison Johnson	SiS UA QS	Rebecca Hengstenberg	R&D UA
Margaret Contreras	SS	Kennan King	SiS UA QS (EAE-All)	Jeremy Larson	R&D UA
Maurine Evans	SS	Ricardo Lima	SiS QS	Maxx Miller	R&D UA
Rachel Gabel	SS	Ras McCurdie	SiS UA QS	Krista Moroder	R&D UA
Christina Hurtado	SS	Zoe Tucker-Winters	SiS UA QS	Brenna Padesky	R&D UA
Alison Johnson	SS	<b>December 13</b>	<b>University of Michigan</b>	Michelle Van Schyndel	R&D UA
Kirsten Kuiken	SS	<b>Erik Fredricksen</b>	<b>Chuck Coyl</b>	Melissa Pharr	R&D UA
Scott Messinger	SS	Adam Caplan	R&D UA (EAE) QS	Greta Weibel	R&D
Sheryl Robbins	SS	Karenanna Creps	R&D UA (EAE) QS	Katie Merriman	R&D
Jaideep Sahai	SS	Kyla Embry	R&D UA (EAE) QS	Jeanie Bettner	UA
Andrea Speir	SS	De'Lon Grant	R&D UA (EAE) QS	Audra Wahhab	UA
Autumn Tilson	SS	Kimberly Harberg	R&D UA QS	<b>January 2005</b>	
Julia Lindenthall	SS	Christopher Shand	R&D UA QS	<b>January 20</b>	<b>Columbia College-Chicago</b>
Sarah Hawkins	SS	Mikala Bierma	R&D UA QS	<b>David Woolley</b>	<b>Chuck Coyl</b>
Marie Walker	SiS (EAE)	Kirsten Benjamin	R&D UA QS	Christine Cascino	SS S&S KN
		Anna Heint	R&D UA QS	Gina Cornejo	S&S KN
		Chelsea Leinberger	R&D UA QS	Tracy Collett	SS
<b>December 7</b>	<b>Florida State University</b>	Matthew Smith	R&D UA (EAE) QS (EAE)	Gillian Humiston	S&S KN
Paul Steger/Ian Borden	Chuck Coyl	Erin Farrell	R&D UA (EAE) QS (EAE)	Kinsey Klug	S&S KN
Adam Thompson	UA	Malaika Nelson	R&D UA QS	Christlan Litke	S&S KN
Jeanine Gangloff	UA	Courtney Harge	R&D UA QS	Margaret McGee	S&S KN
Josh Kirby	UA	Kevin Kuczek	R&D UA (EAE) QS	Meghan Principe	SS S&S KN
Jasmine Bracey	UA	David Abed	R&D UA (EAE) QS	Christopher Sanderson	S&S KN (EAE)
Christine Holmes	UA	Adam Miller-Batteau	R&D UA (EAE) QS	Evan Siemanski	SS S&S KN
Beth Cummings	UA	Robert Sulaver	R&D UA (EAE) QS	Travis Sims	S&S KN
Frankie Alvarez	UA	<b>December 16</b>	<b>University of Southern Mississippi</b>	Marc Tizura	SS S&S KN
Jeff Darland	UA	<b>Scot Mann</b>	<b>Richard Ryan</b>	Kera Yates	S&S KN
Megan Boone	UA	Corey Cochran	SiS	David Yondorf	SS (EAE)
Matt Quinones	UA	Amy Couey	SiS	David Fink	R&D UA
Aaron Abelman	UA	Lee Crouse	SiS	Alexander Hashioka-Oatfield	R&D SS UA BS
Michael Niedzwiecki	UA	Cory Cunningham	SiS	Urzula Husior	R&D SS UA
Steve Sharkey	UA	Daniel Dauphin	SiS	Mathias Maloff	R&D SS UA (EAE) BS
David Bishop	UA	Isaac Gardner	SiS	Jamie Orr	R&D SS UA BS
Aniela McGuinness	UA	Kathryn Hayden	SiS	Jeffrey Phillips	R&D SS UA
Deborah Hartranft	UA	Michael Husband	SiS	Calvin Pohlhammer	R&D SS UA
Danielle Jackson	UA	Melody Latham	SiS	Mark Stetson	R&D SS UA
Natalie Fairchild	UA	Fred Lloyd	SiS	Daniel Subotich	R&D SS UA BS
Edelyn Parker	UA	Kelly Martin	SiS	Jason Walsh	R&D SS UA BS
Ricardo Terrell	UA	Carly McIntosh	SiS	Sylvia Wiczorkiewicz	R&D SS UA
		Tiffany McCleave	SiS	Evan Wilson	R&D SS UA BS
<b>December 7</b>	<b>Ithica College</b>	Min Lee	SiS	<b>January 24</b>	<b>The Actors Gymnasium</b>
<b>Bret Yount</b>	<b>Brian Byrnes</b>	Karen Murphy	SiS	<b>Angela Bonacasa</b>	<b>Chuck Coyl</b>
Ronan Traynor	SiS (EAE)	Chad Martin	SiS	Rachel Stubbs	QS
Titania Angara	UA	Matt Mazara	SiS	Chris Julun	R&D QS
Jonathan Kanter	UA	Robdyn Sheffield	SiS	Elizabeth Styles	R&D QS
Ellen Cribbs	UA	Myra Schodlbauer	SiS	Amy Harmon	QS KN
Issac Jordan	UA	Sarah Smith	SiS	Jordan Smith	QS
		Heather Snider	SiS	Jessica Dunne	QS
<b>December 7</b>	<b>Sarum Hall</b>	Benjamin Stockton	SiS		
<b>Richard Ryan</b>	<b>Brian Byrnes</b>	Whitney Upton	SiS		
Geoffrey Smith	KN	Jacob Womack	SiS		
Steve Starr	KN	<b>December 17</b>	<b>Louisiana State University</b>	<b>February 2005</b>	
Lucy Nevitt	KN	<b>Geoffrey Kent</b>	<b>Dale Girard</b>	<b>February 6</b>	<b>Winter Wonderland Workshop</b>
Janet Lawson	KN	Anna Richardson	R&D	<b>Mike Mahaffey/John Tovar</b>	<b>David Boushey</b>
David Hammerton	KN	Brace Harris	R&D	Kayce Allison	R&D UA
Meg Kubota	KN	Chaney Tullos	R&D	Aaron Einhorn	R&D UA
Ronan Traynor	KN	Derek Mudd	R&D	Marianne Kubik	R&D UA
		Eric Little	R&D	Craig Lawrence	UA
<b>December 10</b>	<b>Roosevelt University</b>	Kesha Bullard	R&D	David Yondorf	R&D
<b>Angela Bonacasa/Chuck Coyl</b>	<b>David Woolley</b>	Mark Jaynes	R&D		
Devon Fanning	KN	Michelle McCoy	R&D		
Cody Wass	KN	Nick Erickson	R&D UA		
Teppi Kono	KN	Nikki Travis	R&D		
Jed Alexander	KN	Reuben Mitchell	R&D		
Jeffrey Diebold	KN	Sarah Jane Johnson	R&D UA		
Katherine Herrera	KN	Tara MacMullen	R&D		
Christopher LaBove	KN	<b>December 18</b>	<b>City College of New York</b>		
Jesse Grotholson	KN	<b>Denise Hurd</b>	<b>J. Allen Suddeth</b>		
Matt Foss	KN	Rommel Tolentino	UA		
Scott Stangland	KN	Ethan Frisch	UA		
Benjamin Dicke	KN	Edmerald Gan	UA		
		Ruth Sullivan	UA		
<b>December 12</b>	<b>SUNY-Purchase</b>	Carrie Stringfellow	UA		
<b>Ian Rose</b>	<b>J. Allen Suddeth</b>				
Ian Alda	SiS UA QS				
Brittany Bachman	R&D SiS UA QS				



FMs J. Allen Suddeth and Richard Raether pondering...something...or other...maybe they're tired?

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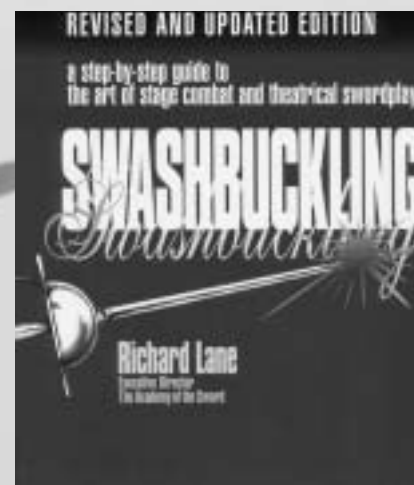
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# BNSCW 2005



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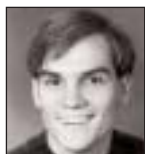
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# The Fight Master

is a publication of

## The Society of American Fight Directors



The Society of American Fight Directors is a not for profit organization dedicated to promoting safety and fostering excellence in the art of directing stage combat/theatrical violence. The SAFD is committed to providing the highest level of service to the field through initiating and maintaining guidelines for standards of quality, providing education and training, promoting scholarly research and encouraging communication and collaboration throughout the entertainment industry.

The SAFD recognizes members at a variety of levels, including Fight Master, Fight Director, Certified Teacher, Advanced Actor/Combatant, Actor/Combatant and Friend. SAFD members have staged or acted in countless numbers of fight scenes for live theatre, film and television.

Through its training programs across the United States, the SAFD has schooled thousands of individuals in the necessary skills to perform or choreograph safe and effective stage combat.

### Friend

One need not be a stage fighter, teacher or choreographer to join and be active in the SAFD. Any individual who has an interest in the stage combative arts who wants to keep abreast of the field and receive all the benefits of memberships may join as a friend.

### Actor/Combatant

Any individual who has passed an SAFD Skills Proficiency Test and is current in Unarmed, Rapier & Dagger (or Single Sword) and another discipline. The SAFD considers Actor/ Combatants to be proficient in performing staged combat safely and effectively.

### Advanced Actor/Combatant

Any individual who is current in six of eight SAFD disciplines, has had three years transpire since their first SPT test and has been a dues paying member in good standing for two years. The SAFD acknowledges Advanced Actor/Combatants as highly skilled performers of staged fighting.

### Certified Teacher

Any individual who has successfully completed the SAFD Teacher Training Workshop. These individuals are endorsed by the Society to teach staged combat and may teach the SAFD Skills Proficiency Test.

### Fight Director

Any individual who has held the status of Certified Teacher of the SAFD for a minimum of three years and has demonstrated through work in the professional arena a high level of expertise as a teacher and choreographer of staged combat. These individuals are endorsed by the Society to direct and/or choreograph incidents of physical violence.

### Fight Master

Individuals who are senior members of the SAFD who have through service to the organization and the art form been granted this honorary title. These individuals serve in an advisory capacity as the College of Fight Masters, as master teachers at the National Stage Combat Workshops and as adjudicators of the Skills Proficiency Tests.

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**1-800-659-6579**

For stage combat assistance, workshop information, and general questions.

Call 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

# Society of American Fight Directors

DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND SAFETY OF STAGE COMBAT



**The Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD)** is a non-profit organization devoted to training, and improving the quality of stage combat. We are committed to the highest standards of safety in the theatrical, film and television industries. The SAFD offers educational opportunities across the country at universities, privately and at the annual National Stage Combat Workshop expressly to disseminate this information. In addition, the SAFD tests individuals in three categories:

Actor/Combatant ♦ Teacher ♦ Fight Director

However, one need not take any sort of test to become a member of the SAFD. Anyone interested in the art of fight choreography and stage fighting can join. SAFD members receive a 10% discount on SAFD workshops; *The Fight Master*, a journal published twice yearly; and *The Cutting Edge*, a newsletter published six times yearly with news updates on SAFD activities, policies and members.

To apply for membership in the SAFD, fill out the form below and send to:

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Dues are \$35 annually. (For members outside the U.S., annual dues are \$40)  
Your enclosed check will cover dues for the current year.

Please make checks payable to **Society of American Fight Directors**

## **Membership Application** **Society of American Fight Directors**

*(Please Print)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

*If you have passed the SAFD Skills Proficiency Test, please fill out:*

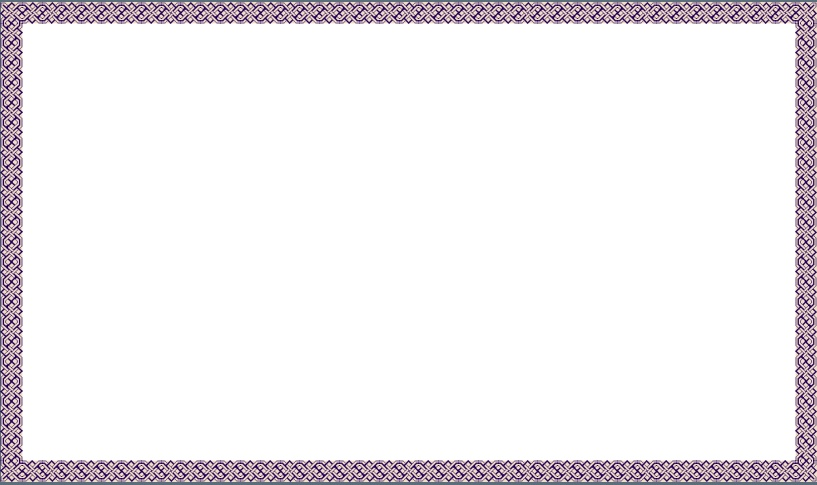
Date Tested: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_

Weapons: \_\_\_\_\_

Adjudicator: \_\_\_\_\_





FORWARDING & RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**The Society of American  
Fight Directors**  
1350 East Flamingo Road, #25  
Las Vegas, NV 89119

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